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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the four 2003 issues of a publication providing a forum for scholarly reviews and discussion of developmental research and implications for social policies affecting children. Each issue focuses on a single topic as follows: (1)"Do You Believe in Magic?: What We Can Expect from Early Childhood Intervention Programs" (Jeanne Brooks-Gunn); (2) "Kindergarten: An Overlooked Educational Policy Priority" (Sara Vecchiotti); (3) "Toward an Understanding of Youth in Community Governance: Policy Priorities and Research Directions" (Shepherd Zeldin, Linda Camino, and Matthew Calvert); and (4)"Juveniles' Competence To Stand Trial as Adults" (Laurence Steinberg, and others). (HTH)

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Social Policy Report

Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away

Volume XVII, Number 1 2003

Do You Believe In Magic?: What We Can Expect From Early Childhood Intervention Programs

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

Summary

Portions of this paper were presented at a research briefing, sponsored by the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the U..S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means. Results are presented from evaluations of several early intervention programs, all of which provided high quality, center-based early childhood education and family-oriented services. Three perspectives are brought to the topic: (1) the developmental outcomes of children who have been identified as being vulnerable due to environmental circumstances; (2) the processes underlying the links between circumstances such as parental poverty and low education and child well-being; and (3) the efficacy of early childhood intervention programs for altering vulnerable children's success in school and beyond. The first perspective deals with the ways in which children develop that enable them to enter kindergarten with the competencies necessary to do well in school. The second considers the mechanisms that tie environmental conditions such as poverty and low parental education to child well-being. The third stresses the potential for early childhood education programs to alter school trajectories of vulnerable children. Concluding points are summarized for which there is consensus, by developmental researchers and policy experts, given the state of the evidence on the evaluation of early intervention programs. First, high quality center-based programs enhance vulnerable children's school-related achievement and behavior. Second, these effects are strongest for poor children and for children whose parents have little education. Third, these positive benefits continue into the late elementary school and high school years, although effects are smaller than they were at the beginning of elementary school. Fourth, programs that are continued into elementary school and that offer high 'doses'of early intervention have the most sustained long-term effects. It is unrealistic, given our knowledge of development, to expect short-term early interventions to last indefinitely, especially if children end up attending poor quality schools. It is magical thinking to expect that if we intervene in the early years, no further help will be needed by children in the elementary school years and beyond.

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From the Editor

In this issue of the *Social Policy Report*, we present a policy research brief that Dr. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn delivered to Congress on early intervention. I publish it in *SPR* for two reasons. First, it is an excellent summary of the field and makes the important point that there are no inexpensive, short, and simple responses to the problems of familial poverty and parental low education. Too often policy-makers seek magic bullets because that would be quick and cheap. But there are no easy solutions. Early intervention is often pursued with the belief that we can do something at this point so that no further help will be needed later on. Of course, we know that to be false, but this research brief eloquently makes this case for members of Congress. The second reason I publish the policy research brief is that it presents a message that may be difficult to hear: In order to enhance children's well-being, interventions need to be intensive, integrated, high quality, and continuing. In other words, they are not inexpensive.

A research brief is one form of communication with policymakers, like testimony. Several years ago, SRCD's now Committee on Policy and Communications published a Guide to Congressional Testimony, edited by Kathleen McCartney and Deborah Phillips. Preparing research briefs and testifying before Congress are important ways that we can serve our field. However, one must know how to prepare testimony that is understandable, objective, and convincing. The former guide published by the Committee offers much useful information and this publication of *SPR* provides an outstanding example of such work.

We are also fortunate to have commentary by leaders in the fields of psychiatry, economics, and psychology; Robert Emde, Janet Currie, and Edward Zigler. Because briefs and testimony have to be succinct and hence "brief," these three statements round out the coverage represented in this article, presenting important relevant information. The Zigler piece, for example, reviews the federal history surrounding Head Start.

The pendulum swings back and forth with respect to the importance on early versus later development. In recent years, the focus has been on the former, in part because of the compelling nature of research on brain development and experience. But early intervention is also attractive because it is mistakenly often viewed to be all we need to do. We know that interventions will differ depending on the developmental needs of the child. We need as a society to make a commitment to promoting the well-being of children and youth at all points in development.

Lonnie Sherrod, Ph.D., Editor
Fordham University

Do You Believe In Magic? What We Can Expect From Early Childhood Intervention Programs

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Ph.D.
Teachers College, Columbia University

It is a pleasure to participate in this research briefing on "Early Childhood Intervention Programs: Are the Costs Justified?," sponsored by the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means and the Joint Center for Poverty Research. My goal is to provide a context in which to interpret the results from the evaluations of several early intervention programs, all of which provided high quality, center-based early childhood education (and family-oriented services). The title "Do You Believe in Magic?" is taken from a popular song from the 1960's (performed by the Lovin' Spoonful). The large effects seen at the end of early education are not due to magic; they are based on what is known about young children's development, and the conditions and circumstances that promote or impede it. The ingredients of high quality early education are not magic, either, and may be repeated across centers, settings, populations, and regions of the country. To expect effects to be sustained throughout childhood and adolescence, at their initial high levels, in the absence of continued high quality schooling, however, is to believe in magic. Indeed, the fact that effects are sustained, albeit at more modest levels, through adolescence in some cases, highlights the potential power of such initiatives.

Background

As a developmental psychologist, I bring three perspectives to this topic. These three are: (1) the developmental outcomes of children who have been identified as being vulnerable due to environmental circumstances; (2) the processes underlying the links between circumstances such as poverty and low maternal education and child competencies; and (3) the efficacy of early childhood intervention programs for altering vulnerable children's success in school and beyond. All three are long-standing concerns of my policy research on children and families.

The first has to do with the ways in which children develop that enable them to enter kindergarten with the competencies necessary to do well in school. A particular focus is on children who, on a probabilistic basis, are less likely to arrive at the school door with the requisite skills; these include children who are vulnerable due to biological and environmental conditions (Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Werner, 1995). Environmentally vulnerable children would include those whose families are poor or near-poor, whose parents have not completed high school (and perhaps today, parents who have gotten a GED or high school degree but have not received further training or education), and whose parents are teenagers (which increases the likelihood of low education and poverty tremendously; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Haveman & Wolfe, 1995). Environmental factors outside of the family also increase the likelihood of school problems; these include, but are not limited to, neighborhood poverty, exposure to toxins, resources available in the community, ease of access to services, and community-level cohesion and norms about children's behavior (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997; Goldman, 1995; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Lewit & Baker, 1995; Kohen et al., 2002; Sampson, et al., 1997).

The second topic has to do with the processes that underlie the links between environmental conditions and child competencies. Family-level processes are often the focus. How does poverty, low education, or low socioeconomic status (SES) more generally, actually influence children? Developmental psychologists consider, for example, interactions between parent and child to be central to the development of many competencies (Bornstein, 1995; Collins et al., 2000; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Are individual variations in dimensions such as harshness, sensitivity, or the provision of learning experiences accounting, in part, for links between poverty and young children's well-being? Does maternal emotional distress or access to social support account, in part, for these links? Several research groups, including my own, have been addressing these questions for young children (Bradley, 1995; Bradley et al., 1989; Jackson et al., 2001; Klebanov et al.1999; Mayer, 1997; McLoyd, 1998).

The third topic has to do with the efficacy of family- and child-oriented programs to alter the outcomes of vulnerable children. Programs have varied in the location of the service (home, center, parenting group), the target (the child, the mother, the dyad, the family, or a combination), the timing (beginning prenatally, in infancy, in preschool), the intensity (full day programs to weekly or monthly home visits), the extensivity (1 to 5 years of intervention), as well as the curriculum (skills-based education, parent-child

interaction training, literacy skills, parental coping skills, provision of social support; Brooks-Gunn, et al., 2000; Gomby, 1999; Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000). My personal experience in this arena began with the Educational Testing Service Head Start Longitudinal Study, conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to evaluate the efficacy of Head Start in four communities and multiple centers. We found positive effects in the early years of school (Lee, Brooks-Gunn, & Schnur, 1988; Lee, Brooks-Gunn, Schnur, & Liaw, 1990), as did others (McKey et al., 1985). Of particular interest were the positive effects on inhibitory control, as well as on more often-studied verbal and early reading skills. I am one of the principal investigators of the Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP), at present the largest multi-site randomized trial testing the efficacy of early childhood intervention upon children's well-being, in which the same intervention was implemented across the country (8 sites). These children (all of whom were low birth weight and premature; Gross, Spiker, & Hayes, 1997; Infant Health and Development Program, 1990). The children in the intervention group received services from birth through age 3 and have been followed through age 8 (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1994; McCarton et al., 1997). Finally, I am one of the investigators in the Early Head Start National Research and Evaluation Project, a 17-site randomized evaluation which is in the field (Love et al., 2002).

Young Children's Development and SES

Issues addressed in this briefing include the following:

(1) What are the competencies of preschoolers that are associated with success in elementary school?;

(2) What is known about the impact of environmental conditions in the first 4 years of life upon children's well-being, both in elementary school and later in life?;

(3) What are the family processes that underlie links between poverty and children's well-being?;

(4) What is the state of the knowledge about the efficacy of early childhood intervention programs, and for whom and under what conditions are programs effective?;

(5) What long-term effects are realistic to expect from early childhood programs?

Competencies in Early Childhood

Much has been written about school readiness and child well-being. Lists of competencies have been generated by many scholars. Areas of competency include: physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches toward learning, language usage, and cognition and general knowledge (Kagan, 1992; Love et al.,1994). Focusing on the developmental tasks of childhood would generate a different, yet overlapping, list of competencies to be acquired. These have been labeled: cognitive growth and learning, self-regulation, trusting and loving relationships with parents, cooperation with and empathy toward peers, and physical health (Moore et al., 2001; Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn, 2001).

How well do these competencies jibe with what is expected in school? Kindergarten teachers have also been asked to report on what competencies are important. Lewit and Baker (1994) compared the responses from three different studies of kindergarten teachers and families to estimate rates of school readiness. In one, teachers rated the most important characteristics of school readiness as physical health, communication skills, enthusiasm, taking turns, and the ability to sit and pay attention. In another, 7,000 kindergarten teachers estimated that only 65% of their students in the fall of 1990 were ready for school. If as many as one-third of kindergartners may not be considered by their teachers to be ready for school, the proportions may be much higher in poor communities.

Teachers' perceptions of children's abilities are associated with youngsters' successes. This is true, vis-à-vis reading and math achievement, even controlling for actual pre-reading and math scores (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). We suspect that teachers are basing their perceptions of ability on a combination of those characteristics that they mention in more descriptive work. That is, kindergarten teachers are concerned with children's emotional regulation and impulse control in the classroom (taking turns, ability to sit and pay attention), just as much as they are with children's ability to count and to associate letters with sounds. If any of you doubt the importance of emotional competencies, please spend one-half of a day in a public school kindergarten class.

Poverty in Early Childhood

Our research on the impact of low income on children is summarized in several places (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; 2000). Several points are highlighted here. First, income is associated with children's cognitive development, achievement, and behavior during the preschool period. We find associations beginning at around 2 years of age and continuing through age 8 (using the Infant Health and Development Program with IQ data

What We Can Expect From Early Childhood Intervention Programs

Janet Currie, UCLA

In her testimony, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn raised several issues that are worth further exploration. First, could intervention improve future outcomes, even if it had no impact on cognitive test scores? Second, what is the evidence that large-scale public programs like Head Start (rather than small-scale, model programs) can achieve gains? And third, what is the evidence regarding longer-term effects of early intervention?

It is natural for developmental psychologists to consider the effects of intervention on outcomes such as inhibitory control and other aspects of self-regulation. But much of the literature evaluating early intervention focuses on cognitive test scores to the virtual exclusion of other measures. There has been much hand-wringing over the fact that initial gains in cognitive test scores following intervention tend to decline over time ("fade-out"). Yet given how easy it can be to induce gains in such test scores (e.g. by "teaching to the test"), volatility in these scores should not be surprising. An increasing body of literature, for example, by Nobel prize winning economist James Heckman, emphasizes the importance of non-cognitive skills to success. Suppose that it is not possible to make children more "intelligent"; does this mean that early intervention is doomed to failure? Not if early intervention can help children to avoid stigmatizing special education programs, to get along in the classroom, and ultimately to have higher educational attainments.

However, as Brooks-Gunn alludes, there is a great deal of evidence that gains from early intervention in both cognitive and other domains are maintained for long periods of time by many children. It may be as she suggests that a key factor affecting the maintenance of gains is the school environment following the early intervention. Currie and Thomas (2000) show that the children most likely to suffer "fade-out" in test score gains are also most likely to attend the worst quality schools. This result suggests that gains from early intervention can be maintained as long as subsequent schooling is not of the worst quality.

Demonstration programs such as the Infant Health and Development Program have shown that it is possible to improve children's cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes through early intervention. It is encouraging that evaluations of Head Start have also shown long-lasting gains for many children. For example, Currie and Thomas (1995) compare children who attended Head Start to their own siblings and find show that those who attended Head Start have higher scores on a test of vocabulary, and are less likely to have repeated a grade. Garces, Thomas and Currie (2002) use retrospective data on Head Start attendance in a sample of young adults, and show that, relative to their siblings, adults who attended Head Start have more schooling, and are less likely to have been booked or charged with a crime.

Criticism of early intervention programs can be constructive, to the extent that it pushes researchers to more carefully evaluate claims of effectiveness. It is to be hoped that the next generation of studies will get further inside the "black box" of program design to tell us what features of these programs are key to successful early intervention.

from age 2 to 8, and the National Longitudinal Study of Youth-Child Supplement with verbal receptive vocabulary test data from age 3 onwards and achievement test data collected every other year from age 5 onwards). By age 3, the effects are most pronounced for children who are persistently poor and for those who are experiencing deep poverty (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Duncan et al., 1994; Smith, et al., 1997; Klebanov et al., 1998). Effects are not limited to those below the poverty threshold, however.

Second, these effects on achievement test scores do not diminish during the elementary school years and if anything, increase somewhat . (Zhao & Brooks-Gunn, 2002) We suspect that these findings are indicative of the fact that, in general, elementary school education is not ameliorating academic disparities between children at various points in the social class distribution (Lee, et al., 1996). These findings have implications for the reduction in effect sizes on cognitive test scores for early childhood education programs as children progress through school.

Third, preschool income has an effect on rates of completed schooling, not just early cognitive and achievement test scores during childhood (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, Yeung, & Smith, 1998). We have found, for example, that income in the early years of life, but not family income in middle childhood or early adolescent years, is associated with high school completion rates (using a sample from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics). Not surprisingly, for years of completed schooling beyond high school, family income in the early adolescent years also matters (since college attendance is not free).

Fourth, a common criticism of the literature linking poverty and child well-being is the possibility of selection bias. That is, families who have more income may differ in unmeasured ways from families who have less income; if these differences are not controlled, then any demonstrated income effects may be spurious (Mayer, 1997). We have addressed this measurement problem by estimating the effects of income upon children within the same families (since, for example, a family might have been poor when one child was 3, but not when another child in the same family was 3). We still find income effects on elementary school achievement and on high school completion when using these sibling techniques (Duncan et al., 1998).

Fifth, why should early income matter? We hypothesize that, since low income in the early years of life is associated with less adequate preschool competencies, children are set on a trajectory for lowered school achievement that is difficult (although probably not impossible) to alter. The work of Entwisle and colleagues supports this premise. Coupled with the fact that the SES disparities are not diminished in elementary school, in part due to the quality of schooling that poor children receive, an uptick in poor children's trajectories is unlikely (Lee et al., 1996). The few analyses testing this assumption report that trajectory changes are possible, though, when parental income increases for poor families on welfare (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, Kohen, & McCarton, 2001).

Family Processes as Links between Poverty and Outcomes

Family processes are considered a potential pathway through which income affects children. Family processes operate via the home environment and parent-child interactions. Warmth and harshness of mother-child interactions, the physical condition of the home, and opportunities for learning account for a substantial portion of the effects of family income on cognitive outcomes in young children (Klebanov et al., 1998; Linver et al., 2002; Yeung et al., 2002).

Some studies (but not all) have established that parent mental health also accounts for a portion of the effect of economic circumstances on young children's health and behavior. Additionally, poor parental mental health is associated with impaired parent-child interactions and fewer learning experiences in the home (Bornstein, 1995; Bradley, 1995).

Since about one-half of the effect of family income on tests of cognitive ability is mediated by (operates through) the home environment, early childhood interventions often profit by focusing on parenting (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2000). However, the research is mixed as to what types of programs are most likely to enhance parenting behavior (Gomby, Culross et al.,1999, 1994; Olds et al., 1999; Ramey & Ramey, 1998).

Efficacy of Early Childhood Intervention Programs

One of the goals of early childhood intervention programs is to diminish the SES disparities in the preschool years so that poor children enter school on a more equal footing to their more affluent peers. This section summarizes agreements and disagreements as to the interpretation of the current literature, among scholars.

Agreement among policy scholars. General agreement among policy scholars exists on some facts but not others related to early intervention. Table 1, adapted from Karoly et al. (1998), provides a summary for well-designed, well-executed, and high quality early intervention programs. Efficacy of these programs is clearly demonstrated. Consensus is usually reached with regard to a number of points, including the following three (Currie & Thomas, 2000; Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn, 2001):

First, early intervention programs have the potential to alter poor children's achievement in elementary school. Well-designed randomized evaluations have reported such effects since the 1970s.

Second, almost all of the programs reported positive results on childhood outcomes have involved center-based early childhood intervention (Barnett, 1995; Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Karoly et al., 1998). In contrast, most home visiting programs do not find much in the way of child achievement effects (although there are a few exceptions which seem to be related to the intensity of home visiting services as well as to the curriculum; see Gomby, et al., 1999). Programs that offer case management (rather than home visits focusing on parenting skills) to poor families with young children have reported disappointing results, on the whole (St. Pierre et al., 1995). We do not know if any combinations of these intervention strategies are particularly effective. However, at present, center-based programs are the ones with the most consistent effects on children.

Third, the effect sizes seen in the preschool years diminish over the school years. For example, in the Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP), the magnitude of intervention effects on cognitive test scores decreased over time (see Table 2). At age 3, heavier low birthweight children in the intervention group had cognitive test scores that were, on average, 14 points higher than the scores of children in the control group. At 8 years of age, the difference between the intervention and control group, although still significant, was smaller (intervention group children scored 4 point higher than control group children). Similarly, intervention effects on receptive vocabulary scores diminished between the age 3 and age 8 assessments. Heavier low birthweight children in the intervention group scored 9 points higher at the age 3 assessment and 6 points higher at the age 8 assessment than children in the control group. Once again, the magnitude of intervention effects remained statistically significant over time. Intervention effects on reading comprehension, as measured by the Woodcock-Johnson, also diminished over time in the Abecedarian Project.

Fourth, effects are largest for children who would have been in mother-only care, relative care, or family child care if the IHDP early childhood intervention had not been offered (Hill, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002). Effects were smaller for those children who would have been in center-based care if the IHPD early childhood intervention had not been offered, again suggesting the power of early programs.

Fifth, effects of IHDP at age 8 are from 8 to over 10 points for the heavier low birth weight children who received 350 or more days at the child care centers (Hill, Brooks-Gunn, & Waldfogel, in press).

Disagreement among policy scholars. Scholars disagree, however, in their interpretation of the following four issues:

First, what do we make of the fact that the effects of early childhood education on school achievement are greatest at the beginning of elementary school, compared to later on? Some scholars have called the fact that treatment sizes diminish a "fade-out" effect. This term is misleading since the randomized studies that have followed children through elementary school report smaller, but still significant effects, through this period (Lazar et al, 1982; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Karoly et al., 1998). "Fade-out" implies that children who received early childhood intervention look the same as (randomized control) children who did not receive the intervention. This is not true. In a later section, the issue of whether the effects found later in life are meaningful is discussed.

Second, what do we make of the fact that our evidence base is not representative of the entire population of poor children? Most early childhood programs have been, by design, single-site studies. Clearly, these samples are not representative of the nation's children. However, they were never designed to be representative. Instead, they were conducted to exhibit that such programs can be efficacious. Looking across studies suggests that such interventions may be efficacious for various subgroups or poor children. For example, the Parent Child Development Center (PCDC) programs were efficacious for African-American and for Hispanic children (Andrews et al., 1982). And, in the Infant Health and Development Program (concentrating on those children who weighed at least 2000 grams/4.4 pounds in the eight sites), the program was efficacious for African-American, Hispanic, and white children (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993). Given the IHDP's design, families from across

Charting Intervention Effects Over Time

Robert Emde, University of Colorado

In this compelling statement, Brooks-Gunn reviews evidence indicating that center based early childhood intervention programs do provide benefits but that to expect such benefits to be an "inoculation" would be wrongheaded. To expect benefits to persist in a disadvantaged or stressed population, without attention to what is needed after early childhood, would be to engage in magical thinking. In this space, I would like to add further pieces of evidence from two randomized control trials (RCTs) that underscore the effectiveness of early intervention and that include home visitation. I will also argue, building on the Brooks-Gunn testimony, for the urgent importance of longitudinal follow up for early interventions.

Results of the RCT involving 17 sites selected from the new national programs of Early Head Start are now available. A research consortium carrying out this study has included investigators from 16 universities (including this author and Brooks-Gunn) as well as collaborators from Mathematica Policy Research and the Administration for Children and Families of DHHS. Some 3000 families were enrolled in this study and significant positive impacts from Early Head Start programs were found in cognitive, language and socio-emotional development observed at both two and three years of age. There were also positive impacts at these ages in parenting—based on observations of parent-child interactions and on parental self report. Impacts were stronger in programs independently evaluated as more fully implementing Head Start's performance standards and in those that had home visiting as well as center components (what were called "mixed-approach" programs). Although impacts occurred across domains and demographic groups, effect sizes were modest (c. 10-20%), with impacts larger in some of the subgroup analyses (e.g. 50%). The need for longitudinal study is clear. The children of this study are now being evaluated at five years of age prior to kindergarten entry, and assessment after school entry would be valuable since impacting readiness to learn and socio-emotional regulation that contribute to school readiness are goals of this early intervention. (Love et al., 2002)

As implied in the Brooks-Gunn testimony, longitudinal study after early intervention is important for understanding what continues to work and what is needed in later development in order to maintain and enhance early gains. And there is another reason for longitudinal study that is emerging from research. This has to do with the clear suggestion of favorable long term impacts on conduct. As reviewed, both the Perry Preschool Program and the Abecedarian Project found reductions in school dropout and in teenage parenting rates and the former program, in a follow up into young adulthood, found a reduction in juvenile delinquency and crime. The results of another longitudinal study, involving a 15 year follow up after a carefully done randomized control trial are even more revealing. The early intervention consisted of a program of nurse home visitation that took place during pregnancy and the child's first two postnatal years (Olds et al., 1999). In addition to the long term impacts on their mothers (lesser welfare dependency, child maltreatment, criminality and use of adverse substances) there were conduct effects on the children who were now adolescents. The children who had been born to unmarried mothers in low SES households had fewer incidents of running away, fewer arrests, fewer convictions, fewer sex partners and a lesser use of cigarettes and alcohol; in addition, parents reported these children had fewer behavioral problems.

The social policy import is striking. Longitudinal study is crucial, not only to document what is needed to sustain early intervention effects, but also to appreciate possible influences on later aspects of child development. Pervasive effects may occur beyond cognitive or learning enhancement. Even when cognitive enhancements may seem to disappear, positive effects may occur in the domains of antisocial behavior. It is instructive that when Head Start began it was primarily concerned with enhancing cognitive competence and, over time, enhancing social competence became appreciated as being equally important. Early Head Start has now added goals of enhancing relationship building and socio-emotional regulation, and some of us have seen this intervention as also contributing to positive early moral development and conduct regulation. Will follow up reveal what leads to positive influences on conduct?

Our prisons are competing with our schools for public dollars and teachers complain about spending too much time maintaining classroom order as opposed to teaching. As the testimony reviews, kindergarten teachers are as much concerned with children's conduct (e.g. the ability to regulate emotions, pay attention and take turns) as they are with abilities to associate letters with sounds and count. As Brooks-Gunn shows us, there is no magic from early intervention and we need to know more about what helps beyond the initial intervention years. I would add this point of emphasis. Longitudinal study is key. What could be more important for social policy than understanding more about the conditions under which early intervention leads to improvements in conduct?

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the SES spectrum were included; the program was most efficacious for those children whose mothers had a high school education or less and those children whose mothers had incomes of 200% or less of the poverty threshold (Liaw & Brooks-Gunn, 1993; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1992).

Such results should lessen concerns about the earlier studies focusing primarily on poor African-American children. The Infant Health and Development Program results suggest that efficacy is most likely for children who are poor or near poor and/or have mothers with a high school education or less. At the same time, within samples of poor mothers, efficacy has been demonstrated across ethnic groups, for married and single mothers, and for working and non-working mothers (Love et al., 2002).

Third, what about the fact that sample sizes are small or interventions are limited to one site? The initial studies were designed and implemented by individual teams of investigators, not as part of national evaluations. Funding constraints always limit sample size. The Abecedarian Project and the Perry Preschool Program include about 100 children each. However, the Parent Child Development Center studies were initiated in three sites, with short-term effect sizes similar to those seen in the two single-site studies just mentioned (Benasich et al., 1992). And, the Infant Health and Development Program was conducted in eight sites nationwide, similar results to those of the Abecedarian Project were found when the heavier babies were age 5 and 8 (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1994; McCarton et al., 1997).

Fourth, what about the relative paucity of studies that have followed the children into adolescence and adulthood? While more follow-up studies are always welcome, I am willing to accept the current findings as relevant. If some of the current experiments are able to trace their children through adolescence, then our database will be stronger. If not all treatment programs or subgroups within a program exhibit sustained effects, then these findings will inform yet another generation of preschool programs as to their design and implementation. As an example, the long-term results from the Perry Preschool Program and the Abecedarian Project are not identical. Both find reductions in school dropout and in teenage parenting rates (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, in press; Karoly et al., 1998). However, the Abecedarian Project also reports continued effects on school achievement while the Perry Preschool Program does not. The Perry Preschool Program reports reductions in juvenile delinquency and crime while the Abecedarian Project does not. These variations could be due to sample differences, to treatment differences (nature of curriculum, timing of program initiation, length of program), or to differences in the schools and neighborhoods in which these children lived. The fact remains, however, that both are finding sustained effects into young adulthood.

What Long Term Effects are Realistic to Expect?

How large do effects of early intervention need to be? Some policy scholars suggest that the sizes of the effects in middle childhood are not large enough. What is the standard? Is a decrease in special education placement or grade repetition of 50% large enough (Lazar & Darlington, 1982)? Is a sustained effect of the intervention of about 4 to 6 points on a standardized achievement test or a cognitive test large enough (Ramey & Ramey, 1998)?

Early intervention programs have short-term effects, ones that are larger than what we have seen in other arenas of human services research. We have had more success in early childhood than at later points in the life course. Somewhat surprisingly, we have much less experimental work systematically varying an aspect of the elementary or high school (Mosteller, 1995).

If policy makers believe that offering early childhood intervention for two years will permanently and totally reduce SES disparities in children's achievement, they may be engaging in magical thinking. To paraphrase Edward Zigler, there is no quick fix, either in education or anyplace else. After an early childhood intervention program ends, poor children are very likely to go to schools that are not conducive to learning. They are likely to live in neighborhoods with relatively few resources. Their neighborhoods are relatively more likely to have high levels of toxins, including lead, violence, asthma-inducing pathogens, and unsafe play areas. Their parents are more likely to experience discrimination in housing and jobs as well as have transportation difficulties. Given these often co-occurring conditions, the fact that effects continue (although they are smaller than those seen at the end of the program itself) through elementary school (which all would agree) and even through adolescence is, in my opinion, impressive. And the continuing effects into young adulthood even more so (even taking into account the thin data base).

Forty Years of Believing In Magic Is Enough

Edward Zigler, Yale University

Magic beliefs sprouted alongside Head Start and its precursors. Magic was in the air in 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson told the nation that the young children who attended a new summer school program called Head Start were going to grow up to be taxpaying and productive citizens instead of welfare dependents and prison inmates. Prominent behavioral scientists like J. McVicker Hunt and Benjamin Bloom were telling an eager public that small changes in a child's rearing environment early in life were a magic wand that would add dozens of IQ points. These were the times characterized by what Sandra Scarr called "naïve environmentalism" and which Zigler dubbed the "environmental mystique." Rampant optimism led many to believe that a brief period of intervention—like spending half-days in Head Start for 6 or 8 weeks—would inoculate a child against the past and future devastating effects of growing up in poverty.

In their defense, the founders of Head Start and most of the experimental early childhood programs being developed at the time were not aiming to create a nation of geniuses. Head Start's planners, for example, were charged with the more serviceable mission of helping young children who lived in poverty begin school on an equal footing with peers from wealthier homes. This relatively modest intent became obscured by the hoopla over claims of IQ enhancers and poverty busters. It was not until the 1998 Reauthorization of Head Start that Congress made school readiness the program's official goal. This move has yet to quell the flow of overpromises and high hopes that continue to plague efforts to alleviate the risks faced by children growing up in poverty.

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn asks us to ponder whether the goal of school readiness is good enough, i.e., whether it is meaningful enough to justify the cost of attaining it. Of course, a reasonable expectation emanating from considerable evidence is that if children are better prepared for school on their first day, they will be more successful in school and perhaps beyond. The evidence reviewed by Brooks-Gunn indicates that this is, indeed, the case, but some of the initial advantages weaken over time. The literature, thus, proves what we should have known all along: There is no magical, permanent cure for the problems associated with poverty.

This does not mean that early intervention is not worth doing. The data merely suggest that we become realistic and temper our hopes. Generally speaking, children whose families are poor do not match the academic achievement of children from more advantaged homes. The point of school readiness programs like Head Start and public Pre-Kindergartens is to narrow this gap. Expecting the achievement gap to be eliminated, however, is relying too much on the fairy godmother. Poor children simply have too much of an environmental handicap to be competitive with age-mates from homes characterized by good incomes and a multitude of advantages.

Reducing the achievement gap is possible, but here, too, there is no quick fix. The path to school readiness begins before birth with good prenatal care and maternal practices. Caregivers are central to the acquisition of all that the child requires to prepare for school: good physical and mental health and sound cognitive, social, and emotional development. The acclaimed report, *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, also emphasizes that parent-child interactions are the key to acquiring most competencies. Intervention must, therefore, begin early and enlist parents as the child's first and most influential teachers. At school-age, we cannot just dump the child at the schoolhouse door. We must assure that continuing developmental needs are met and that parents participate in the child's education so they can support educational goals at home.

We detailed such a system of extended intervention (prenatal–Age 8) in our book, *Head Start and Beyond*. Models already exist for each element of the three-stage system we envisage (and funding could be bolstered by folding the massive Title I of the ESEA into the effort). For the years prenatal–3, when many developmental milestones are accomplished and parents are the major source of socialization, the relatively new Early Head Start program is already showing positive results. Quality, comprehensive preschool services can be delivered through the time-tested Head Start model. Children in the early elementary school years can be served by programs like the Chicago Child-Parent Centers and the Head Start Transition Project. (Although study of the latter showed transition children to have school adjustment comparable to the control group, the controls also experienced strong transition services and, in a rare finding, both groups achieved national norms.)

Will high quality, comprehensive, two-generation services spanning the years prenatal–8 help narrow the achievement gap? The evidence so well reviewed in this *Social Policy Report* suggests yes. Will it be worth it? Absolutely, if our nation is truly committed to School Reform and its goal Number 1, school readiness. Are we sure there is no magic potion that will push poor children into the ranks of the middle class? Only if the potion contains health care, child care, good housing, sufficient income for every family, child rearing environments free of drugs and violence, support for all parents in their roles, and equal education for all students in all schools. Without these necessities, only magic will make that happen.

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Conclusion

Early intervention programs may prove, in the decades to come, even more efficacious than those initiated in the 1960's to 1990's. As more and more mothers enter the work force, full-time early intervention programs will be critical to the success of both mothers and young children. This is especially true for families in the bottom two quartiles of the income distribution, a large proportion of whom are single mothers. Over the past 10 years, the proportion of single, never-married mothers with children under age 6 in the labor force has soared and now surpasses the rate of married mothers with children under age 6 – increasing from less than 50% in 1990 to 67% in 1998 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999).

As evaluations of programs serving families in the 2000s become available (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2000), what will we consider evidence of cost effectiveness? If a cost analysis suggests that an early childhood program breaks even (and even if it does not break even), but reduces the high school dropout rate by one-third, would we want to fund it? If an early childhood program promotes stable maternal work (and presumably somewhat higher family incomes, fewer days of missed work, and/or more stable employment), will we add this into our cost estimates of future early childhood intervention evaluations?

One other cost consideration merits attention. Early childhood intervention services are more expensive for younger than older preschoolers. The staff:child ratios are much smaller for infants than preschoolers. Consequently, costs need to be estimated separately for infants (birth to 18 months), toddlers (18 to 36 months), and preschoolers. And, from an early childhood policy perspective, we need to ask whether the efficacy of intervention is dependent on the age of the child at program entry. The Abecedarian Project offered full-time child-care beginning in the 1st year of life, the Infant Health and Development Program in the 2nd year of life, and the Perry Preschool Program in the 3rd or 4th year of life. Does the timing of entry make any difference, vis-à-vis effects in elementary school and beyond? And does it matter how long the intervention lasts? The Abecedarian Project lasted 5 years, the Perry Preschool Program one or 2 years, and the Infant Health and Development Program 2 years (for the child care component).

If early childhood interventions were equally effective whether they were started when the child was 6 or 18 or 24 months of age, then policy might favor serving toddlers rather than infants. Such a decision would have vast cost implications (leaving aside current policy of requiring mothers with infants to enter to work force, which is a different issue but one with implications for child care more generally). If the Universal Pre-Kindergarten movement (or the more targeted Pre-K approach, which would offer slots to poor children first) gains in popularity in our cities and states, then concerns about providing preschool services to all 4-year-olds would diminish (assuming that all of them were actually served under an Universal Pre-K system), with more attention being placed on the three-year-olds and the two-year-olds. Such a scenario would alter the costs of providing early childhood intervention.

In brief, from a comparative perspective, then, early childhood intervention has larger effects (at the end of the program) than interventions begun later in childhood and adolescence. In addition, the effects of early childhood programs continue through elementary school and, while they are smaller, they are still larger than the immediate effects of other, later interventions. If the sum of the largest effects in the educational literature is not large enough, what do we want?

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Table 1
Short and long-term effects of selected early intervention programs on participating children

	IQ test	Achievement test	Behavior	Special education	Grade repetition	High school graduation	Crime/ delinquency	Employment	Income	Welfare Participation	Teen pregnancy
Perry Preschool (27)	7	14		27	27	27	27	19	27	27	19
Houston PCDC (11)	3	8 - 11	4 - 7	8 - 11	8 - 11						
Abecedarian Project (21)	12	21		15	15						
IHDP – Full sample (8)	8	8	3	8	8						
IHDP – Heavier low birthweight sample (8)	8	8	5	8	8						

Favorable, statistically significant results
Mixed results
No significant results

Source: Karoly et al., 1998; Campbell et al., in press
Note: Number in box refers to age of child when measure was last taken. When results were mixed, the age refers to the last age when the effect was significant. Cells with no numbers indicate that the outcome was not measured for that project.
PCDC: Parent Child Development Center; IHDP: Infant Health and Development Program

Table 2
Cognitive and behavioral problem test scores for low-birthweight, premature children in the IHDP intervention at ages 3, 5, and 8

	Intervention group	Follow-up only group	Difference
IQ scores			
Heavier LBW			
Age 3	97.9	83.6	14.3***
Age 5	95.4	91.7	3.7*
Age 8	96.5	92.1	4.4**
Lighter LBW			
Age 3	91.5	84.4	7.1***
Age 5	89.8	91.3	-1.5
Age 8	88.3	89.5	-1.2
PPVT-R scores			
Heavier LBW			
Age 3	92.7	83.3	9.4***
Age 5	84.5	78.5	6.0**
Age 8	92.4	85.7	6.7**
Lighter LBW			
Age 3	89.2	84.4	4.8***
Age 5	80.9	80.3	0.6
Age 8	81.6	84.4	-2.8
Behavior problem scores			
Heavier LBW			
Age 3	42.0	48.6	-6.6**
Age 5	29.2	33.3	-4.1
Age 8	30.0	31.3	-1.4
Lighter LBW			
Age 3	44.3	46.7	-2.4
Age 5	33.1	32.8	0.4
Age 8	33.0	31.9	1.1

*** $p \leq 0.01$. ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.
Sources: Brooks-Gunn et al., 1994; McCarton et al., 1997

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Purpose

Social Policy Report (ISSN 1075-7031) is published four times a year by the Society for Research in Child Development. Its purpose is twofold: (1) to provide policymakers with objective reviews of research findings on topics of current national interest, and (2) to inform the SRCD membership about current policy issues relating to children and about the state of relevant research.

Content

The *Report* provides a forum for scholarly reviews and discussions of developmental research and its implications for policies affecting children. The Society recognizes that few policy issues are noncontroversial, that authors may well have a "point of view," but the *Report* is not intended to be a vehicle for authors to advocate particular positions on issues. Presentations should be balanced, accurate, and inclusive. The publication nonetheless includes the disclaimer that the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Society or the editors.

Procedures for Submission and Manuscript Preparation

Articles originate from a variety of sources. Some are solicited, but authors interested in submitting a manuscript are urged to propose timely topics to the editors. Manuscripts vary in length ranging from 20 to 30 pages of double-spaced text (approximately 8,000 to 14,000 words) plus references. Authors are asked to submit manuscripts electronically, if possible, but hard copy may be submitted with disk. Manuscripts should adhere to APA style and include text, references, and a brief biographical statement limited to the author's current position and special activities related to the topic. (See page 2, this issue, for the editors' email addresses.)

Three or four reviews are obtained from academic or policy specialists with relevant expertise and different perspectives. Authors then make revisions based on these reviews and the editors' queries, working closely with the editors to arrive at the final form for publication.

The Committee on Child Development, Public Policy, and Public Information, which founded the *Report,* serves as an advisory body to all activities related to its publication.

Social Policy Report

Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away

Volume XVII, Number II 2003

Kindergarten: An Overlooked Educational Policy Priority

Sara Vecchiotti

Summary

Many Americans assume children's publicly funded education begins with kindergarten. To the contrary, kindergarten is not mandated in all states. Moreover, most kindergarten programs implemented in the public education system are half-day; full-day kindergarten is far less frequent. Access to kindergarten is highly dependent on state, school district, and individual school initiatives and resources. Thus, kindergarten provision is an educational equity issue.

Kindergarten is a pivotal transitional year in which children learn foundational skills and develop knowledge necessary for academic success in the early grades. Considering this crucial role, it is surprising how often kindergarten is overlooked when research and education policy agendas are formed. Neither states, nor the federal government, collect enough systematic data on kindergarten, especially at a school district or individual school level. Extant data sources differ in reported state kindergarten policies. Thus, an accurate picture of the availability, utilization, and content of kindergarten programs at a national or state level is not available.

Current policy debates include mandating kindergarten, requiring attendance, and establishing a uniform entrance age. Further, consensus has not been reached as to what is appropriate in kindergarten for curriculum content, instructional methods, and screening and assessment practices. Distinct roles for prekindergarten and kindergarten should be defined and programs should be coordinated to promote better continuity in learning. Research indicates that delaying entrance to kindergarten results in only ephemeral effects and that full-day kindergarten has academic and practical benefits for children and families. Finally, state and federal recommendations range from revising data collection polices to aligning kindergarten policies and practices to prekindergarten and grades 1-12.

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From the Editor

We have had a series of *Social Policy Reports* on welfare reform, because of the timeliness given pending reauthorization. An equally timely set of issues pertains to early education. Hence, we have had several issues on early education, given its relevance to current policy debates about reading instruction and narrowing the achievement gap. Deborah Stipek reviewed the research on age of school entry. Cybele Raver explored the importance of emotional development to early educational intervention, and in the last issue, Associate Editor Jeanne Brooks-Gunn reviewed evidence that early educational interventions should not be expected to work magic. In the current issue, Sara Vecchiotti reviews research and policy on kindergarten, viewing it as the overlooked school year.

At a time when several states are passing universal voluntary pre-kindergarten, kindergarten is not yet mandated by all states, and many kindergartens are only half-day programs. Research on kindergarten is equally variable across states. Many states do not have good data systems on availability, utilization, and curriculum. Research is needed on kindergarten as a transitional year from preschool to school, on what content is important given the transitional nature of this school year, and what screening and assessment procedures are appropriate. Distinct roles need to be defined for pre-kindergarten versus kindergarten; that is, a coordinated integration of pre-k, kindergarten, and elementary school needs to be designed.

We are also pleased to have in this issue a statement from Ruby Takanishi, President of the Foundation for Child Development. Dr. Takanishi initially commissioned a similar article on kindergarten by Sara when she was the Barbara Paul Robinson Fellow at the Foundation. In her commentary, Dr. Takanishi addresses the timeliness and significance of the issues raised in this article.

At a time when we are considering making all preschool, such as Head Start, more school-like and more instructional in style, it is important that we step back and take a general look at the whole school entry system. We need to review existing research on each component of the school entry system, decide where we need more research, and make policy recommendations designed to provide a cohesive, integrated approach to children's entry into school. Proceeding piecemeal by just focusing on Head Start and preschool, or just on pre-K, or just on kindergarten will not develop the comprehensive approach to schooling that is needed for maximum effectiveness. Equally important is the need to develop some federal guidelines on this growing school entry system so that vast inequities do not develop across states.

Sara Vecchiotti's *Social Policy Report* provides the needed research information and policy perspective on kindergarten. With other relevant *SPR*s, we hope we will make a contribution to the current debate on early education.

Lonnie Sherrod, Ph.D.
Editor

Kindergarten: An Overlooked Educational Policy Priority

Sara Vecchiotti
Foundation for Child Development

Traditionally, kindergarten has been viewed as children's first organized educational experience in a group. In kindergarten, children are expected to begin to integrate their intellectual, social and physical competencies to meet the demands of a structured educational experience (Early, Pianta & Cox, 1999). Kindergarten is described as setting the stage for subsequent learning and school success, since it aims to provide the foundation for future academic progress (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). Recent results from national studies confirm its importance to the educational success of young children (Denton & West, 2002; West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000; West, Denton, & Reaney 2001).

Kindergarten is an important policy issue since a child's access to kindergarten is highly dependent on state, school district, and school level initiatives and resources. Across and within states, wide variability exists in kindergarten policies and in the implementation of kindergarten programs. This variability in the availability, utilization, content and duration of kindergarten programs contributes to current inequities in children's early education.

Further, kindergarten provision in the public education system must respond to current social changes. The traditional view of kindergarten differs from reality in two ways. First, for even more children than before, kindergarten is not their first educational experience due to increasing participation in preschool and child care programs (NCES, 2000). These programs may fulfill many of the traditional aims of kindergarten, but kindergarten still serves as an important transitional experience for children. Once kindergarten bridged home and formal education. Now it is more likely to bridge early childhood education and K-12 education. Second, some kindergarten programs no longer aim to foster all areas of children's development, but tend to focus only on academic skills once taught in the first grade.

The Current Provision of Kindergarten: An Unknown

In contrast to the early history of kindergarten which served three- to six-year-olds (Beatty, 1995), kindergarten programs now serve primarily five-year-old children. Over the years, participation in kindergarten has increased, so that the majority of five-year-old children attend kindergarten in either public or private school programs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001), and 55 percent attend full-day programs (West et al., 2000). There is still a mix of public and private schools offering kindergarten, though in a reversal of past years, public programs now outnumber private programs (Snyder & Hoffman, 2001). Today, eighty-three percent of private programs are religiously affiliated, while 17 percent are non-sectarian (NCES, 1999).

Across the United States, kindergarten classes are half-day, full-school-day, or alternate-day (attend for a full-day every other day). However, some states do not mandate the provision of kindergarten. Further, it appears that half-day kindergarten is the program most likely to be required, while full-school-day kindergarten is less likely to be a requirement. There are varied definitions of the number of hours constituting a half-day or a full-school-day, and few states require compulsory attendance in kindergarten.

In general, little information is collected about the provision of kindergarten programs. Knowledge of kindergarten programs varies according to which data source and what level of data collection (e.g., national, state, school district, local school) is used (see Table 1). As a result, little is known about the extent of kindergarten provision across the states. Questions about how school district policies may differ within and between states cannot be definitively addressed with data currently collected.

Mandated Half-Day or Full-School-Day Kindergarten: Unfinished Business

For the most part, information on kindergarten is limited to state policies governing the provision of kindergarten and is collected by State Departments of Education. Two sources about kindergarten are the Council of Chief State School Officer's (CCSSO) *Key State Education Policies on K-12 Education*, 2000 and the National Center for Children in Poverty's (NCCP) *Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families* (Cauthen, Knitzer, & Ripple, 2000). These reports outline kindergarten policies for each state, including requirements for programs school districts must offer, program duration, and attendance (see Table 1). Where appropriate, kindergarten data from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) (McMaken, 2001) is included as well.

Data from CCSSO (2000) indicate that ten states require school districts to offer full-school-day programs; 20 states require half-day programs (including Nebraska which requires 400 hours); five states require school districts to provide both full-and half-day programs; five states require either full-school-day or half-day programs; and ten states have no specific policy. NCCP (2000) data show that eight states require school districts to offer full-school-day programs; 38 states require half-day programs; and three states have no specific policy. ECS (2001) reports that eight states require districts to offer full-day programs (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia). Sources show that half-day kindergarten itself has not been fully accepted or

Table 1

The Status of Kindergarten in the United States

This table includes information about requirements for public school districts to provide half and/or full-school-day programs, the length of the kindergarten school day, attendance requirements, kindergarten entrance age, the age of compulsory school attendance, the number of children served in the public school kindergarten programs, and the percentage of eligible kindergarten children served in public school programs. Multiple sources were used to gather data.

KEY

'---' - No State or Local District Policy
LEA - Local Education Agency
N/A - Not Available
CSSCO - Council of Chief State School Officers
NCCP - National Center for Children in Poverty
ECS - Education Commission of the States
NCES - National Center for Education Statistics
FCD - Foundation for Child Development

State[1]	Kindergarten Program					Attendance Requirement			Kind. Entrance Age	Compulsory Ed. Ent. Age	Length of School Day (hours)		# of Children Served Pub. Schl. Kind. 1998-1999	% of Eligible Kind. Chdn. Served in P.S.[6]
	CCSSO[2]			NCCP[3]		CCSSO		NCCP[4]	ECS[5]	ECS[5]	CCSSO		NCES	FCD
	Half Day	And /Or	Full Day	Half Day	Full Day	Half Day	Full Day				Half Day	Full Day		
Alabama	No		Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes[7]	No	5 on or before 9/1	7	--	6	58,055	100
Alaska	--	--	--	Yes	No	--	--	No	5 on or before 8/15	7	<4	>=4	9,838	92
Arizona	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	5 on or before 9/1	6	2	--	65,312	114
Arkansas	No		Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	5 on or before 9/15	5	--	6	34,120	100
California	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	No	5 on or before 12/2	6	3.3	--	459,781	100
Colorado	--	--	--	--[12]	--	--	--	--[12]	LEA option	7	--	--	50,859	100
Connecticut	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	5 on or before 1/1	5	--	--	42,500	98
Delaware	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	5 on or before 8/31	5	2.5	--	8,025	84
Florida	No		Yes	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	5 on or before 9/1	6	--	--	174,470	104
Georgia	No		Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	No	5 by 9/1	6	--	4.5	112,287	116
Hawaii	No		Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	No	5 on or before 12/31	6	6	6	15,019	92
Idaho	--	--	--	Yes	No	--	--	No	5 on or before 9/1	7	2.5	4	17,318	101
Illinois	Yes	or	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	5 on or before 9/1	7	2	4	150,953	90
Indiana	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	No	5 on or before 7/1	7	2.5	--	71,974	89
Iowa	Yes	or	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	5 on or before 9/15	6	--	--	35,772	88
Kansas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5 on or before 8/31	7	2.5	5	31,279	80
Kentucky	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	No	5 by 10/1	6	3	6	46,900	90
Louisiana	No		Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	No	5 on or before 9/30	7	--	6	58,922	83
Maine	--	--	--	Yes	No	--	--	No	At least 5 on 10/15	7	2.5	2.5	14,698	82
Maryland	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	5 by 12/31	5	--	--	57,813	84
Massachusetts	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	No	LEA option	6	--	--	71,390	91
Michigan	--	--	--	Yes	No	--	--	No	At least 5 on 12/1	6	--	--	131,021	93
Minnesota	Yes	or	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	At least 5 on 9/1	7	--	--	60,876	87
Mississippi	No		Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	No	5 on or before 9/1	6	--	5.5	39,509	96
Missouri	Yes	or	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	5 before 8/1	7	1.5	3-7	67,335	89
Montana	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	No	No	5 on or before 9/10	7	See [8]		10,848	84
Nebraska	Requires 400 hours			Yes	No	No	N/A	No	5 on or before 10/15	7	--	--	21,145	84
Nevada	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	Yes	5 on or before 9/30	7	--	2	23,986	135
New Hampshire	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	LEA option	6	2.5	--	8,831	53
New Jersey	--	--	--	Yes	No	--	--	No	LEA option	6	2.5	6	90,689	89
New Mexico	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	5 before 9/1	5	2.5	--	23,759	90
New York	--	--	--	Yes	No	--	--	No	LEA option	6	2.5	5	202,894	84
North Carolina	No		Yes	Yes	No	N/A	No	No	5 on or before 10/16	5	See [9]		102,603	116
North Dakota	Yes	and	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	5 before 9/1	7	2.75	5.5	7,917	78
Ohio	Yes	or	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 by 9/30	6	2.5	--	134,949	85
Oklahoma	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	5 on or before 9/1	5	2.5	6	44,664	93
Oregon	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	No	5 on or before 9/1	7	--	--	37,530	90
Pennsylvania	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	No	LEA option	8	2.5	5	126,155	79
Rhode Island	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	5 on or before 12/31	6	2.5	5	10,907	84
South Carolina	No		Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	5 on or before 9/1	5	2.5	5	47,160	93
South Dakota	Yes	and	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	5 on or before 9/1	6	See [10]		9,495	81
Tennessee	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	5 on or before 9/30	6	4	4	71,870	108
Texas	Yes	and	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	5 on or before 9/1	6	--	7	290,432	103
Utah	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No	5 before 9/2	6	2	--	34,529	98
Vermont	Yes	and	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	5 on or before 1/1	6	2	--	6,976	82
Virginia	Yes	and	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 on or before 9/30	5	3	5.5	84,154	98
Washington	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--[13]	LEA option	8	2	4	71,323	95
West Virginia	No		Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	No	5 before 9/1	6	--	5.25	21,821	96
Wisconsin	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	No	5 on or before 9/1	6	See [11]		59,611	79
Wyoming	Yes		No	Yes	No	No	N/A	No	5 on or before 9/15	7	2.5	5	6,383	80

Notes follow on page 5

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Table 1 Notes.

[1] States in which there are differences between CCSSO and NCCP data are in bold. Differences occur in program requirement and/or the attendance requirement data. For example, CCSSO data indicate that there is no state kindergarten policy for program requirements but NCCP data indicate that half-day programs are required. NCCP data for Illinois state that only half-day programs are required to be offered, while CCSSO data state that half-day or full-school-day programs are required. For Arizona, CCSSO data state that attendance is required while NCCP does not. [2]Data are from Key State Education Policies on K-12 Education, 2000, a publication of the Council of Chief State School Officers. [3]Data are from Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families, 2000, a publication of the National Center for Children in Poverty. [4]Collected data on kindergarten attendance did not make the distinction between half- and full-day programs. [5]Data are from the Education Commission of the States website, specifically: State Notes: Kindergarten State Characteristics by McMaken (August, 2001; last updated March 2002). [6]Calculated using 2001 Census Data estimates of the 1999 five-year-old population by State and the 1998-1999 NCES data on the number of Kindergarten children served in public school programs by State in Digest of Education Statistics 2000 (Snyder & Hoffman, 2001). Since both data sources are estimations and the NCES data includes children younger or older than five years who attend kindergarten, some percentages total over 100%. [7] In Alabama, student attendance is only required if the student is enrolled. [8] Montana has an annual aggregated hours requirement. [9] North Carolina requires 1,000 hours of kindergarten per school year. [10] South Dakota has no minimum hourly requirement. [11] Wisconsin has no minimum hourly requirement. [12] In Colorado, state funding is available for half-day kindergarten and all school districts provide half-day programs, even though it is not a requirement. Kindergarten attendance is voluntary. [13] In Washington, kindergarten attendance is not required.

implemented in the public education system across all fifty states, and clearly not full-school-day kindergarten.

Length of Kindergarten Day: No Common Definition

What constitutes a full-school-day or half-day program, as measured by school day hours, varies across the states (see Table 1). CCSSO (2000) data indicate that eight states consider a full-school-day to be 6.0 hours or more (plus Missouri, which allows hours to range from 3.0-7.0). Ten states consider a full-school-day program to be between 5.0 to 5.5 hours, and eight states consider a 2.0-4.5 hour range acceptable for full-school-day programs. For half-day programs, 20 states consider between 2.0 to 2.5 hours to be acceptable, six states consider between 2.75 and 4.0 hours to be adequate, one state considers 1.5 hours to be half-day, and another considers a half-day to be 6.0 hours. No standard for defining full-school-day or half-day hours exists, thereby making comparisons among states and knowledge-based policymaking difficult.

Attendance: Not Compulsory for Kindergarten

Most states do not have policies requiring kindergarten attendance. According to CCSSO (2000), nine states with half-day programs require attendance and six states with full-school-day programs require attendance. NCCP (2000) reports that 12 states require kindergarten attendance (11 of these states require school districts to offer half-day programs and one state requires school districts to offer full-school-day programs). ECS (2001) data show that 12 states have policies that mandate kindergarten attendance (two are full-day). School officials or truancy officers rarely enforce attendance policies in kindergarten. Based on these sources, more children are required to attend half-day programs than full-school-day programs.

Uncertainty about Compulsory School Age

It is not surprising that compulsory attendance in kindergarten differs across the states since the entrance age to compulsory education varies as well. Kindergarten entrance age is generally around five years (although in some states and, historically, four-year-olds may attend), and compulsory attendance age ranges from age five to age eight. CCSSO (2000) data show that two states have a compulsory school entrance age at eight, 18 states at age seven, 22 states at age six, and seven states at age five. ECS data (2001) are similar with two states having a compulsory entrance at age eight, 18 states at age seven, another 22 states at age six, and eight states at age five. This variation may reflect reluctance among states to make kindergarten attendance compulsory, as it is for rest of public education. Differences in the age for compulsory education should be a topic for further exploration, to investigate whether it is due to state budgetary constraints, parental preferences, or uncertainty about the appropriate age for beginning compulsory education.

Differences among State Reports: Cautions for Interpretation

The differences found in state policies about kindergarten require careful interpretation. Differences may be due to: 1) policy changes since the time of the surveys, 2) different survey questions eliciting different answers, and/or 3) different administrators within the State Departments of Education completing the surveys. The CCSSO and NCCP data on full- and half-day programs and attendance requirements differ in the reported findings (see Table 1). Researchers who collected the CCSSO and NCCP data reported that they relied on respondents within the State Departments of Education, and that no verification occurred.

It appears that state administrators at different levels such as assistant superintendents, directors of early childhood education programs, and research analysts do not share a common understanding of state kindergarten policy, and, therefore, did not provide consistent answers to questions. Thus, a clear picture of kindergarten programs in the United States does not emerge.

School District and Local School Level Data Needed

Little is known about the policy choices and rationales of various school districts and schools. To form an accurate depiction of kindergarten provision across the United States requires data at a school district or local school level in each state, not just at the state-policy level. National sources such as the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and many states generally collect information only about kindergarten enrollment; the distinction between half- and full-school-day programs is rarely made. In response to a list-serve inquiry about kindergarten programs through the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists, State Department of Education representatives from 14 states replied that they collect information on kindergarten. Only five states (one was not able to share data) made the distinction between full- and half-day programs in data collection; six states did not; and three states did not respond.

This initial examination of the provision of kindergarten programs indicates that, like many social goods in the United States, residency is crucial to access. What state or school district a five-year-old child resides in or what local school a child attends determines her access to, and the extent, of her kindergarten experience.

In the United States, educational policy decisions are made locally in different political and socio-economic contexts, resulting in the variation in kindergarten programs available at a state and local level. Through inspection of data that a few states shared regarding their provision of full- and half-day programs (see Table 2), the importance of school-district level data in contrast to state level data is demonstrated. For both Illinois and Missouri, CCSSO reported a state policy of offering either full- or half-day programs, and NCCP reported a state policy of only half-day programs. Using school district and school level data in Missouri, full-school-day kindergarten is the most common program implemented in the public schools. In Illinois, slightly more children attend half-day programs than full-school-day programs.

According to both the CCSSO and NCCP, Kansas has no explicit state policy regarding kindergarten provision, yet kindergarten has an established presence in Kansas with most schools offering half-day programs and with a recent trend towards offering full-school-day programs. Both data sources also indicated that Connecticut had a state policy of half-day programs, yet there is an even split between the number of children in half-day programs and the number of children in full-school-day or extended day programs. As is often the case, reported state policy may not reflect school district and local school practice. Clearly, relying on state-level reports does not fully capture the extent of kindergarten provision and utilization in school districts in these states. What is needed is more research, using statewide school district and local school level data, to present a more detailed accurate picture of kindergarten programs across the states.

This initial examination of the provision of kindergarten programs indicates that, like many social goods in the United States, residency is crucial to access. What state or school district a five-year-old child resides in or what local school a child attends determines her access to, and the extent, of her kindergarten experience. The uneven educational playing field begins with kindergarten, if not before. Within a state, a child in one school district may attend half-day kindergarten for 2.5 hours while another child in a different district attends full-school-day kindergarten for 5.0 hours. If kindergarten is truly the entrance into the public education system, as most perceive it to be, it is the state's responsibility to ensure that kindergarten policies regarding availability, length of school day, or attendance are consistent with policies of the subsequent school years (Grades 1-12). Additionally, as kindergarten bridges early education and early formal schooling, kindergarten curricula and instructional methods should be aligned with those of preschool and first grade.

Kindergarten suffers from the middle child syndrome, caught between early education and public education, because it shares features with both educational levels. The variation in kindergarten polices across the states show that policymakers and legislative bodies alike overlook kindergarten. Although the kindergarten classroom is affiliated with the public education system at the elementary school level, the diversity in the provision and structure of kindergarten resembles the diverse programs of the early education and care system for preschoolers and infants/toddlers. Yet, as part of the public education system, kindergarten teachers are typically more highly educated and better compensated than teachers in preschool programs (Head Start and community-based programs) (Early, Pianta & Cox, 1999; Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2001). Kindergarten is unfinished business and deserves our attention.

Table 2

Differences between State Policy and School District and Individual School Practice

State[1]	Kindergarten State Policy[2] *For School District Requirements*		Number of Children Enrolled in Kindergarten Programs[4] *State Departments of Education Data*			
	CCSSO	NCCP	HDK	FDK	AFDK	ED
MO[5]	HDK *or* FDK	HDK	13,903	49,791	N/A[3]	N/A
IL[6]	HDK *or* FDK	HDK	78,145	68,890	523	N/A
KS[7]	NSP	NSP	21,421	9,534	430	N/A
CT[8]	HDK	HDK	21,119	16,266	N/A	4,185

	Number of Kindergarten Programs Offered *State Departments of Education Data*				
	HDK	FDK	AFDK	ED	Both HDK & FDK
MO					
School Districts	14	475	N/A	N/A	33
Individual Schools	102	905	N/A	N/A	127
IL					
School Districts	265	500	9	N/A	117
Individual Schools	883	1,138	9	N/A	249
KS					
School Districts	–	–	–	N/A	N/A
Individual Schools	520	238	26	N/A	N/A
CT					
School Districts	120	70	N/A	42	58
Individual Schools	335	305	N/A	70	102

Note. [1]All data are for the 2000-2001 school year. [2]HDK is half-day kindergarten, FDK is full-day kindergarten, NSP is no set policy. [3]N/A means "not applicable." [4]AFDK is alternate-full-day kindergarten programs and ED is extended-day programs. [5]Data from the Early Childhood Education Section of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. [6]Data from the Illinois State Board of Education, Research and Policy. [7]Data from the Kansas State Department of Education, Planning and Research. In Kansas over the past five years there has been a gradual increase in full-school-day programs and a decrease in half-day programs since in the 1996-1997 school year only 152 schools offered full-school-day, every-day kindergarten and 567 schools offered half-day, every-day programs. [8]Data from the Connecticut State Department of Education, Division of Grants Management. Half- and full-school-day combinations mean either half- and full-school-day or half-and extended-day.

Policy Issues in Kindergarten

A main question for each policy issue regarding kindergarten is posed in the following section. Concerns surrounding these issues are briefly presented and summarized. Directions for future research, and policy action are provided, and in some cases, when supported by research, recommendations are offered. Generally, the purpose is to inform future debates, not to provide answers to these neglected issues.

Kindergarten Mandates: Should the kindergarten year be required for all children?

Kindergarten teachers, principals, parents, advocates, and policy-makers expect that in kindergarten children learn the basic academic and social skills that prepare them for the demands of first and subsequent grades. Since some states do not mandate the provision of kindergarten, many programs are half-day, and kindergarten attendance is rarely compulsory, this expectation may not consistently be met. This situation has inspired calls for mandated kindergarten to ensure that either kindergarten is offered, that children are required to attend, or both. Others believe that only the establishment of full-school-day kindergarten programs will meet current and future expectations of the kindergarten year. They believe that expectations of what children should learn in kindergarten will not be fully realized until statewide, required attendance and/or full-school-day kindergarten is implemented throughout the public school system. Research has not explored the effects of policies mandating kindergarten or full-school-day kindergarten on children's access to or development in kindergarten programs, nor on how mandates influence the financing of kindergarten programs.

Entrance Age: Should there be a uniform entrance age?

Across and within states and school districts, entrance cut-off ages for kindergarten are not uniform. Cut-off points

for entrance ages vary between summer and winter months for five-year-olds (ECS, 2000). Usually, there is an age span of one year in kindergarten classrooms, with younger children having their date of birth close to the cut-off age (called summer children). In some classrooms, however, in the beginning of the school year children as young as four and as old as six are present. Wide age spans in classrooms can make it difficult for teachers to implement a curriculum that accommodates children's substantially different levels and paces of learning (Shepard & Smith, 1986; NAECS/SDE, 2000), unless more teacher training programs include preparation for ungraded classrooms. Research does not specifically address the implications that a *uniform* entrance age policy would have on children's access to or development in kindergarten, but Stipek's (2002) recent review of entrance age research does suggest that educational experiences in school contribute more to children's overall cognitive competencies than does maturation.

To form an accurate depiction of kindergarten provision across the United States requires data at a school district or local school level in each state, not just at the state-policy level.

Kindergarten Entrance: Should entrance be delayed?

In kindergarten classrooms, there are always younger children and older children, typically with an age span of a year. Delaying entrance further widens the gap between them and establishes the expectations for kindergarten achievement based on the performance of the oldest children in the class (NAECS/SDE, 2000). The emphasis on school readiness has also led many parents and school administrators to expect that children possess basic academic skills (e.g., identifying sound-letter relationships and shapes) prior to kindergarten entrance.

Both schools and parents sometimes delay children's entrance into kindergarten for a year (most likely for summer children), a practice called red-shirting. This practice is based on the belief that some children need extra time to mature, and that older children adjust better to the demands of kindergarten than younger children. Research does not support these practices (Stipek, 2002). Extra time to mature or additional educational experience (e.g. retention or transitional kindergarten) does not result in an academic boost. While older children do initially perform better academically, these positive effects are limited and fade out in the early grades (Carlton & Winsler, 1999; Crone & Whitehurst, 1999; Shepard & Smith, 1986; Shepard & Smith, 1989). Retaining children in kindergarten can also negatively affect children's social and emotional development, particularly their self-esteem (Shepard & Smith, 1986; Shepard & Smith, 1989). Stipek (2002) suggests that greater attention should focus on making school ready for children by tailoring teaching and learning opportunities to children's diverse skills, rather than concentrating on making children "ready" for school.

Curriculum and Instructional Methods: What is appropriate?

Early childhood researchers, parents, school administrators, teachers, and policymakers occasionally disagree about what curriculum content and instructional methods should be used in kindergarten. In developing or adopting kindergarten curricula or kindergarten program standards, many programs today do not use the available research knowledge of young children's development and learning. (NAECS/SDE, 2000). Other factors influencing curriculum design include: differing interpretations of the National Education Goals Panel definition of school readiness (which refers to both the children's and the schools' readiness), the increasing rates of retention in kindergarten (more children are being held back in kindergarten based on their academic and/or social skills) (NAECS/SDE, 2000), and the recent context of high-stakes testing in public schools. A common terminology to discuss classroom curricula and instruction does not exist, and often the concepts described are framed in opposition to each other. Researchers, early educators, parents, and policymakers use the language of *child-centered* vs. *didactic*, *intellectual skills* vs. *academic skills*, *child-initiated activities* vs. *teacher-directed activities*, and *developmentally appropriate practice* vs. *developmentally inappropriate practice*. Within this context, two original purposes of kindergarten—fostering thinking skills and building basic academic skills—can become sources of conflict in some kindergarten programs when one approach is favored over the other.

The approach typically described as child-centered focuses on how children learn in terms of developing children's general thinking, problem solving, and social skills, while the other approach, typically described as didactic, concentrates on what children learn in terms of the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills. The first approach values learning as children actively constructing, reflecting, evaluating, integrating, and applying their knowledge and skills in their daily activities and social interactions. The second approach values learning as children gaining knowledge in reading, math, and writing, as well as mastering basic skills, with a particular emphasis on literacy.

The "child-centered" approach has been criticized as inadequately preparing children for the academic demands

of the first grade, underestimating children's competencies, and placing little emphasis on reading. The "didactic" approach has been criticized as promoting the pushdown of the first-grade curriculum into kindergarten, narrowly focusing on "surface" skills and children's performance on specific academic outcomes, and undermining children's motivation to learn.

Everyday in kindergarten classrooms, teachers meet the greatest challenge of developing curriculum content and instructional practices that foster all areas of child development (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999; NAS, 2000; NRC, 2001), perhaps by blending the approaches described above. Yet, research demonstrates that across kindergarten classrooms great variability exists in terms of curricula content, methods of delivery instruction, and teacher expectations (Pianta, 2002): this variability is also found among prekindergarten and first-grade classrooms (Pianta, 2002).

Consensus as to how and what children should learn in kindergarten among educators, administrators, and parents will not be reached until a common language is used to promote mutual understanding of the concepts involved. Further, instructional practices and curricula that are sensitive to the influence of culture and language should be developed, since kindergartners come from diverse backgrounds, including both immigrant and American-born children. It is also important to consider that other factors affect curriculum design, such as children's prior educational experience and parental preference. States and school districts should set kindergarten program standards that aim to enhance children's thinking, academic, and social skills, instead of focusing on one area to the exclusion of others.

Screening and Assessment: What are appropriate practices?

Due to emphasis on school accountability and children's achievement, the practice of assessing young children is growing. In some cases, schools also assess children to determine admission into kindergarten. Assessment of young children is complex, because young children's abilities are emerging. Children learn different knowledge and skill domains at varying rates. These complexities contribute to the confusion in determining the appropriate purpose and methods of assessment in kindergarten. Questions underlie how and when assessments should be made and used: to measure individual children's ability or progress, to influence placement and retention decisions, to identify learning differences, to inform instructional planning, or to evaluate outcomes of kindergarten programs. Methodological issues refer to what form of assessment (such as standardized testing or curriculum-based, performance assessments) should be used to fulfill a particular purpose. These concerns have grown out of schools' practice of using results *solely* from assessments of children's school readiness skills using norm-referenced, standardized tests (NAECS/SDE, 2000), instead of gathering information from various sources and with different instruments (Linn, 1981; Wolery, 1987). Assessment practices are important and should be informed by research, since decisions to delay entrance into kindergarten, place children in developmental or transitional kindergartens, or retain children in kindergarten, are made according to assessment results. State and school district policy should reflect assessment practices that use multiple sources of information and allow children to demonstrate their skills in different ways, allowing for variability in skill learning and learning pace, as well as being sensitive to the influence of children's cultural background (APA, 1985; 1999; NAS, 2000).

Qualified Teachers: Is there a persistent shortage?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) position is that kindergarten teachers must have a college education with a specialization in early childhood education, and have completed a supervised teaching experience (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Early, Pianta, and Cox (1999) found that 46.5 percent of the public school kindergarten teachers had a master's degree or higher, 78.6 percent had an elementary education certificate (K-6), and 49.6 percent had certification specifically for kindergarten or the early primary grades, with an average of eleven years of teaching experience. Thus, kindergarten teachers typically have appropriate training and education according to professional standards, but only half have a specialization in teaching kindergarten or the early primary grades.

Consensus as to how and what children should learn in kindergarten among educators, administrators, and parents will not be reached until a common language is used to promote mutual understanding of the concepts involved.

A shortage of qualified kindergarten teachers is due to the increased efforts to reduce class size in the early primary grades or institute full-school-day kindergarten. As a result, schools hire teachers with emergency or temporary certification, or certification in areas other than early education, or new teachers with little teaching experience to work in kindergartens (personal communication with Z. LeFrak, president of the National Kindergarten Alliance, C. Gossett, president of the California Kindergarten Association, and F. Nathan, executive director of Think New Mexico, April, 2001). Overall, little is known about the prevalence and

impact of these and other practices, which research suggests affects the quality of children's experience in kindergarten. Therefore, school officials are faced with the problem of recruiting and retaining suitable teachers, a situation which plagues not only the rest of the public education system in the United States, but also other countries (OECD, 2001).

Facilitating the Transition into Kindergarten: What are the best practices?

Considering the organizational niche of kindergarten between early childhood education programs and elementary education, easing transition from home or any other site into kindergarten is a concern. Much research has focused on the difficulties many children have transitioning to the intellectual, behavioral, and social demands of kindergarten (Pianta & Cox, 1999; Ramey, Ramey, Phillips, Lanzi, Brezausek, & Katholi, 2000). In Pianta, Cox, Early, Rimm-Kaufman, Laparo, and Taylor (1998), kindergarten teachers reported that half of children transition successfully from early education programs into kindergarten, a third have some problems, almost one-fifth of children experience difficulty when entering kindergarten. In Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000), teachers reported that the most common transition problem for children was difficulty following directions (46 percent), while lack of academic skills was reported 36 percent of the time, and social skills was reported as a problem 21 percent of the time.

Despite recent research on kindergarten transition by Ramey et al., 2000, little evaluation research specifically investigates the effectiveness of program approaches that ease the transition from home to school or from early education programs to kindergarten to promote continuity in learning (ECS, 2000; Kagan & Neuman, 1998). Common practices used by schools and teachers to help families and children adjust to kindergarten (such as school open houses, classroom visits, and parent-teacher meetings held prior to the start of the school year), are primarily unevaluated (ECS, 2000). Prekindergarten programs may also play a role in promoting positive transitions to kindergarten, highlighting the need for good communication between kindergarten and prekindergarten programs, and additional research on standards for best practice.

The transition from kindergarten to first grade has not received attention in recent research and practice, and deserves renewed interest (Alexander & Entwisle, 1998). In kindergarten, children typically have circle time, dramatic play, and learning centers (e.g., blocks, science, free writing), but in first grade children often have individual desks, subject periods, and more paper-pencil work. Transition practices primarily revolve around the transition into kindergarten, overshadowing the crucial transition from kindergarten to first-grade. Since preparation for and success in first-grade relies on kindergarten experience (Alexander & Entwisle, 1998), attention should be devoted to developing practices in kindergarten that promote the transition from kindergarten into the first-grade.

Kindergarten: What should be the relationship to prekindergarten?

Little attention has been devoted to the relationship between kindergarten and prekindergarten programs. NCCP (2000) reports that ten states (Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Oregon) require state-funded prekindergarten or Head Start programs to have a plan to prepare children for transition into kindergarten. With increasing participation in prekindergarten programs, kindergarten, for many, is no longer children's first experience in an educational program (Blank, Schulman, & Ewen, 1999; Mitchell, 2000; NCES, 2000). Since the goal of many preschool programs is to promote school readiness, what then is the role of kindergarten? Curricula could be coordinated to ensure continuity in learning, information about individual child development could be shared, visits to kindergarten classrooms could be arranged, and staff could participate in joint professional development activities (ECS, 2000). Routine, structured relationships should be developed between prekindergarten and kindergarten programs to promote positive transitional experiences for children. This is a particularly difficult challenge since children in a single preschool program often attend kindergarten in different schools.

If kindergarten is truly the entrance into the public education system, as most perceive it to be, it is the state's responsibility to ensure that kindergarten policies regarding availability, length of school day, or attendance are consistent with policies of the subsequent school years (Grades 1-12). Additionally, as kindergarten bridges early education and early formal schooling, kindergarten curricula and instructional methods should be aligned with those of preschool and first grade.

The impact of Georgia's voluntary, universal prekindergarten program on kindergarten programs provides some preliminary information about relationships between the two programs (personal communication with C. Trammell, program manager of the Georgia Voluntary Prekindergarten, May, 2001). Kindergarten teachers agree that the children

who participated in the voluntary prekindergarten program were better prepared for kindergarten, especially regarding pre-reading, pre-math, and social skills (Henderson, Basile, & Henry, 1999). Improving performance in kindergarten is only one area in which prekindergarten and kindergarten influence each other. Other areas include transition practices, curriculum content, and in the professional development of teachers.

In Georgia, informal relationships between prekindergarten and kindergarten programs serve to provide children with additional services and to ease the transition into kindergarten. Prekindergarten programs build relationships with local public schools to obtain services for children that are not available in the prekindergarten program, such as referrals for testing to determine special education needs. At the end of the prekindergarten year various activities occur to promote positive transitions, such as children visiting kindergarten classrooms, kindergarten teachers visiting prekindergartens, and providing parents with transition kits that include puzzles, crayons, magnetic letters, books and suggested summer activities.

Public school prekindergarten teachers are more likely to share information about children with public school kindergarten teachers than prekindergarten teachers in private child care centers or Head Start. This may be a result of the public school prekindergarten and kindergarten programs sharing the same school building and administrative staff, which allows for easier access and interaction among teachers. Thus, the nature and strength of program interactions vary according to the location of the prekindergarten program.

In a few Georgia counties, prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers participate in joint professional development activities. Teachers plan for the upcoming school year together to help promote continuity in children's learning. A few counties have also instituted the practice of "looping," in which prekindergarten teachers follow children to kindergarten and, in some cases, to the first grade. Through this practice, teachers develop a richer knowledge of the children's abilities and development, and continuity in teacher and child relationships is supported.

What is the evidence to support full-school-day kindergarten?

Full-school-day programs have been promoted as enhancing instruction and learning in kindergarten (Fromberg, 1995; Rothenberg, 1995). Research indicates that in full-school-day programs, children spend more time engaged in self-directed, independent learning and dramatic play. Research indicates that in full-day kindergarten science, social studies, art, music, and physical education are included more often than in half-day programs (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Snyder & Hoffman, 2001). Kindergarten teachers report that children experience less frustration in full-day kindergarten since there is more time for them to develop their interests and engage in social activities (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

> *Beyond the initial research indicating educational benefits, full-school-day kindergarten, also has practical advantages for families.*

Also, full-school-day kindergarten allows teachers to more easily pace instruction according to children's individual needs, explore instructional topics in-depth, develop close parent-teacher relationships, and accommodate more teacher-directed individual work with students (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992; Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Evansville-Vanderburgh, 1988). Researchers caution that merely increasing hours may not lead to the positive benefits of full-school-day kindergarten. It is what children experience during the day—an educational environment with appropriate curriculum and teaching practices informed by research—that promotes young children's exploration and learning (Cryan et al., 1992; Gullo, 1990). Any effort to implement full-day kindergarten should also include efforts to ensure that the full-day program is a high-quality, educational experience for children.

Earlier research reviews indicated positive effects of full-school-day kindergarten programs on children's learning and achievement, especially for children from low-income families (Housden & Kam, 1992; Karweit, 1989; Puleo, 1988). Recent reviews conclude that full-school-day kindergarten is advantageous for all children, not just children from low-income families (Clark & Kirk, 2000; Fusaro, 1997). Participation in full-school-day kindergarten, as compared to half-day kindergarten, results in higher academic achievement in kindergarten, especially in reading and math, and promotes good relationships with peers and teachers (see Table 3 for a research summary) (Cryan et al, 1992; Elicker & Mathur., 1997; Gullo, 2000; Sheehan, Cryan, Wiechel, & Bandy, 1991). Studies also indicate that children in full-school-day programs had higher attendance rates and more satisfied parents, as well as long-term, positive effects such as fewer grade retentions and higher reading and math achievement in the early school years (Cryan et al., 1992; Elicker et al., 1997; Gullo, 2000; Sheehan et al., 1991).

However, more research is needed to fully examine the short and long-term effects of full-day kindergarten, especially on subsequent school success in elementary school and other life outcomes (Vecchiotti, 2002). Also, of concern is whether full-day kindergarten lessens the educational performance

Table 3

Summary of Recent Research Comparing Full-School-Day (FDK) and Half-Day (HDK) Kindergarten Programs[1]

Reference	Design/Sample	Meaures	Effects of Full-Day Kindergarten
Gullo (2000)	Longitudinal Midwest school district N=974 second graders N=730 FDK, N=244 HDK	Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) Grade Retention (1st three years) Special Education (1st three years) Attendance records	FDK higher standard scores in ITBS reading and math. FDK less likely to be retained. FDK higher attendance. No differences in special education referrals between HDK & FDK.
Elicker & Mathur (1997)	2 year program evaluation: outcome and process data Middle-class, Midwest community N=179, N=69 FDK, N=110 HDK	Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning-Revised (DIAL-R-Spring of each year) Academic Report Cards Early Childhood Classroom Observation System (ECCOS) Parent Surveys Teacher Interviews 1st Grade Reading Readiness Ratings	HDK had slightly higher work habit scores on the DIAL-R sub-test. FDK showed greater progress on report cards for literacy, math, general learning, & social skills. FDK (27%) & HDK (47%) spent the greatest amount or time in large-group, teacher-directed activities. FDK spent more time in child-initiated activities, teacher-directed individual work, & free play. FDK displayed a slightly higher proportion of positive affect and lower levels of neutral affect. FDK spent more time actively engaged, HDK spent more time listening. *Teachers feel FDK*: eases transition to 1st grade, more time for free choice activities, more time to adjust instruction at an appropriate level for individual children, more time for instruction planning, more time to develop child & parent relationships, less frustrating for children since there is more time to develop their interests. *Parents feel FDK*: more time to explore & learn, better teacher-child relationships, positively influences social development. FDK higher reading readiness scores.
Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden (1992)	Statewide retrospective study N=8,290 kindergartners in 27 school districts Longitudinal study of two cohorts (N=5,716 from 27 & 32 school districts)	Hahnemann Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale	FDK had higher ratings for the following positive behaviors: originality, independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity with peers (react positively to & work well with), approach to teacher. FDK had lower ratings for following negative behaviors: failure/anxiety, unreflectiveness, and holding back-withdrawn.
Sheehan, Cryan, Wiechel, Bandy (1991)	Same as above	Metropolitan Readiness Test Metropolitan Achievement Test	FDK had positive effects into 1st and 3rd grade, with better standardized test performances (5-10 percentile point difference over HDK). FDK less likely to be retained (17%-55% fewer retentions) and placed in Chapter 1 programs (50%-90% fewer placements)

Note.[1] Only includes studies reported in published, peer-reviewed journals (excludes dissertations, conference reports, technical reports etc.) that compared full-school-day, everyday programs with half-day, everyday (excludes alternate day program findings).

gap between children from low- and high-income families. Additional research is needed to fully examine differences between full- and half-day kindergarten programs regarding content, instructional process, and children's social experiences in these programs (Vecchiotti, 2002).

Beyond the initial research indicating educational benefits, full-school-day kindergarten also has practical advantages for families. Consider the following facts: 1) in 1998, women comprised 46 percent of the workforce; 2) 60 percent of mothers with children under six years of age worked in 2000; 3) 57 percent of families with children under six in 2000 were dual-income; 4) 27 percent of families in 1998 were single-parents; and 5) in 2000 78 percent of unmarried mothers (single, widowed, divorced or separated) were employed and 69 percent of married mothers were employed (Fullerton, 1999; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). With half-day kindergarten programs, arrangements for afternoon care are still needed for children in working families. Even though children in full-day programs need after-school care, since the typical work day ends after the traditional full-school day, full-school-day kindergarten provides more support to working families than part-day programs (Capizzano & Adams, 2000; Capizzano, Trout, & Adams, 2000). Moreover, public full-school-day kindergarten may provide children with a high-quality, educational experience that lower-to-middle-class families are unlikely to be able to afford in the private (for profit and non-profit) early education/child care market.

During the 1980s, 56 percent of children participating in research on half versus full-day kindergarten in Ohio spent

the remaining school-day hours in another child care program outside the home (Sheehan, 1988). Today, this percentage is likely even higher. Considering that the quality of care in many child care programs and family child care settings is mediocre (Helburn, 1995; Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1995), the option of spending a full-school-day in an enriching, educational kindergarten may better serve children. Moreover, time spent in poor-to-mediocre programs after a half-day in kindergarten may diminish the gains made in the kindergarten educational experience. Thus, parents should have the option of choosing full-school-day kindergarten for their children to attend in the public education system.

Since kindergarten is primarily the responsibility of the states, campaigns to promote full-day kindergarten should be tailored to the state's political, economic, and social context (Vecchiotti, 2002). Over the past few years, legislation has been proposed to establish or expand full-school-day kindergarten in Colorado, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Washington. While some efforts met with limited success, the move for full-school-day kindergarten was successful in New Mexico. In 2000, full-school-day kindergarten legislation was passed by the legislature (House vote 63-4 and Senate vote 28-8), and was signed into law by Governor Gary Johnson.

Success of this initiative may be attributed to the campaign work of Think New Mexico (a non-profit, bi-partisan, solution-oriented think tank) and their strategy of promoting full-day kindergarten as voluntary. However, Think New Mexico's advocacy for full-school-day kindergarten did not end with passing the legislation, but continued with monitoring the full implementation of the program. In New Mexico, three important issues arose in the effort to establish full-school-day kindergarten: funding sources for the programs, recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, and lack of classroom space. These issues will be at the core of any effort to expand and improve access to full-school day kindergarten.

Areas of Future Inquiry and Research

Kindergarten is a topic ripe for research and for policy development. Ideas for further examination include:

- What constitutes a high-quality kindergarten program? How is quality defined in kindergarten? What are children actually experiencing in kindergarten classrooms? What are the model teacher-parent relationships in kindergarten? (Vecchiotti, 2002)
- How do school district characteristics (e.g., urban, suburban, or rural, district wealth) relate to the implementation of half- or full-school-day programs?
- Do different populations of children (e.g., prior preschool or child care experience; socio-economic status; race; ethnicity) attend half- and full-school-day programs? If so, how do these factors influence children's adjustment and development in kindergarten and beyond?

Multi-method, multi-measure evaluations examining the effectiveness of specific kindergarten practices in promoting child learning and development are needed:

- How do curricula, instructional processes, and children's social experiences differ between half- and full-school-day programs? (Vecchiotti, 2002)
- How can research-knowledge be better translated into schools' design of appropriate curricula and instruction practices to best serve children's development and fulfill local needs?
- What are the practices of states, school districts, or schools in assessing individual children's growth and in assessing the impact of their kindergarten programs? What policies and rationales are needed to develop appropriate assessment practices?
- How are children with disabilities being served in public and private kindergartens?
- How are English Language Learners being served in public and private kindergartens?

The relationship between prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, both public and private, is an area of increasing importance:

- Do prekindergarten and kindergarten overlap? What are their appropriate roles?
- Are there established partnerships and collaborations between prekindergarten and kindergarten programs to ease children's transitions? What practices are effective?

Questions surrounding teacher preparation are:

- What are the characteristics of qualified kindergarten teachers compared to those in other school grades and early education programs?
- Do teacher credentials/qualifications vary by program type (half- and full-school-day) or auspice (public or private)?
- What is the relationship between teacher credentials/ qualifications and children's cognitive, academic, and social development?

Research is also needed to understand efforts to implement full-school-day kindergarten:

- How are states, school districts, and schools financing full-school-day kindergarten?
- Are there trade-offs in implementing full-day kindergarten? Are other worthy programs cut to provide funding for full-day kindergarten?
- When financing is limited, on what basis should options (e.g. prekindergarten, class size reduction) be chosen? (Vecchiotti, 2002.)

- What advocacy strategies have been successful in promoting full-school-day kindergarten as a priority for state, school district, or individual school policy action?
- What policies stimulate full-school-day kindergarten? Does lowering the compulsory school age or kindergarten entrance age, or does mandating full-day kindergarten or establishing voluntary, full-day prekindergarten encourage implementation of full-school-day kindergarten?

Recommendations for State and Federal Action

A state or national perspective on kindergarten programs cannot be formed with current data sources. Little information is specific to kindergarten, even though or perhaps because kindergarten occupies a unique place in the public education system. Since kindergarten policies now differ from the rest of the public education system (e.g., length of school day, assessment practices, and compulsory attendance), kindergarten-specific information is necessary. As kindergarten policies align themselves with grades 1-12, special attention may no longer be necessary. At present, additional policy analysis and research must be conducted to understand this transitional year in children's educational experiences and to formulate appropriate kindergarten policies.

Data Collection and Analysis

States should:

- Ensure that State Departments of Education collect and provide consistent information on kindergarten policies and practices at the school district, and school level.
- Collect appropriate kindergarten data on enrollment, program type (half or full-day), hours served, qualifications of teachers, entrance ages, and assessment practices, at the state, school district, and school level.
- Assess the relationship between state policy, school district, and school practices to inform future kindergarten policy.

Pedagogical and Structural Alignment Issues

States should:

- Align the basic structural requirements of kindergarten, such as length of school day, to those of the subsequent school years, grades 1-12.
- Align kindergarten classroom practice to preschool and first-grade practices to promote continuity in children's early learning.
- Set kindergarten program standards informed by developmental research and that enhance children's thinking, academic, and social skills.

Program Service and Expansion

States should:

- Establish equitable policies to guarantee that high-quality kindergarten programs are available to all children within the state.
- Implement voluntary, full-school-day kindergarten programs in the public schools.
- Evaluate state education budgets and reformulate school-financing formulas to ensure that kindergarten programs, including full-day kindergarten, are fully funded.
- Foster regular interactions between prekindergarten/preschool and kindergarten programs to promote continuity in learning.

Recommendations for federal action include:

- The National Center for Education Statistics must separate kindergarten data from general k-3, k-6, or k-8 data collection questions and institute kindergarten specific questions to include data such as program type, hours served, etc.
- Establish federal incentives for states to expand or establish full-school-day kindergarten programs (similar to federal incentives that exist to establish prekindergarten programs).

Conclusion

Publicly supported kindergarten is over 100 years old, but much work is still needed. Neither states, nor the federal government, collect enough systematic data on kindergarten policies, financing, or practices, especially at a school district or individual school level. The lack of accurate information at the national and state levels obscures the extent of children's access to kindergarten across the states.

Now more than ever, kindergarten bridges early education and formal schooling. To promote continuity in children's early learning, kindergarten policies and practices must be better articulated and aligned with those of grades 1-12, as well as with preschool policies and practices. Kindergarten must define a new role for itself as a pivotal transitional year between preschool and first-grade. What constitutes a high-quality kindergarten program in terms of hours and curricula content is a topic for further research.

Equity considerations are absent from issues involving the provision of kindergarten since kindergarten is assumed to be fully established in the public education system. Yet, a child's kindergarten experience depends on the state and school district in which a child resides, as well as the school a child attends. Moreover, the voluntary option to attend full-school-day kindergarten is not readily available to all children. Children's access to kindergarten, specifically full-day kindergarten, should be a research and policy priority to ensure equal educational opportunities for young children.

Opening Pandora's Box: Discovering Kindergarten as a Neglected Child Policy Issue

Ruby Takanishi
President
Foundation for Child Development

In the spirit of full disclosure, Sara Vecchiotti's policy-oriented brief resulted from a combination of foreseeing a policy opportunity and good timing. Since 1997, the Foundation for Child Development (FCD) has supported a coordinated program of research, policy analysis, and advocacy on voluntary, universal prekindergarten (UPK) for all three- and four-year-olds and full-school day kindergarten for all five-year-olds. Most of FCD's grants and allied activities, however, focused on UPK. We believed, as many policymakers still do, that compulsory public education begins with kindergarten. We, and they, are wrong.

As Vecchiotti explored key research and policy issues related to kindergarten, I experienced an opening of Pandora's box. Kindergarten, as she describes in her paper, is a neglected policy issue in education with important implications for children's learning before and after the kindergarten year. With the expansion of state-funded prekindergarten programs in recent years and looming "high stakes testing" in the third or fourth grade, the alignment of children's opportunities to learn and the content of their education from prekindergarten through Grade 3 is critical in the coming years.

Vecchiotti's analysis also coincided with increasing attention to the kindergarten year, stimulated by a growing number of research reports from the U.S. Department of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K), based on a nationally representative sample of children who entered kindergarten in fall 1998. These studies highlighted the disparities in knowledge and skills of children when they entered kindergarten, and the gaps which increase during the kindergarten year (Lee and Burkham, 2002). Children with low skills are also likely to enroll in low quality schools. Other studies supported the benefits of full-day school day kindergarten for children's achievement. Meanwhile, about 45 percent of American children still participate in half-day kindergarten, which can be about two-and-a-half to three hours a day.

At the same time that research pointed to the importance of kindergarten in addressing educational inequality, states facing severe budgetary deficits were seeking ways to raise the age of kindergarten entry, e.g., Hawaii, and to require parents to pay for full-day kindergarten provided in public schools, e.g., an Indiana school district and in Seattle where higher income parents pay for full-day kindergarten and lower income parents do not. Other states, recognizing the role of kindergarten and universal preschool in school readiness and early learning, were creating full-day kindergartens as an educational policy initiative to narrow the achievement gap between children, e.g., New Mexico (Raden, 2002) and Oklahoma. In some of these states, Vecchiotti's unique brief has informed the debates and state planning. No other resource exists which identifies the key kindergarten policy issues and then integrates existing research to inform these issues. What is missing from the brief is the critical issue of financing kindergarten in states and local school districts.

Vecchiotti's work has led to two FCD initiatives. First, FCD is supporting the Education Commission of the States (ECS) to conduct the first national study of which children have access to full-day kindergarten (FDK), and how states and localities finance FDK. The ECS study includes indepth studies of seven states and school districts within these states, as well as an attempt to address the serious data collection issues of financing and attendance requirements which Vecchiotti identified. As states turn their attention to full-day kindergarten, either to expand it to provide children with more early opportunities to learn or to reduce it because of state deficits, the

continued on page 16

ECS study is already providing policy-relevant information. Second, Vecchiotti's findings have shaped the Foundation for Child Development's efforts to promote the restructuring of prekindergarten, kindergarten, and Grades 1-3 (initially to be called a P-3 initiative) into a well-aligned first level of public education in the United States. FCD aims to contribute to framing how policymakers and the public view the first five years of publicly supported education to include prekindergarten and full-day kindergarten for each children, and to develop integrated curricula and instruction across the current three separate levels of early education supported by well-educated teachers.

The kindergarten year remains a neglected child and education policy issue. Vecchiotti's contribution has been to highlight this neglect and to marshall research to identify what we know and what we need to know to assure that all children have sound early educational opportunities.

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Social Policy Report (ISSN 1075-7031) is published four times a year by the Society for Research in Child Development. Its purpose is twofold: (1) to provide policymakers with objective reviews of research findings on topics of current national interest, and (2) to inform the SRCD membership about current policy issues relating to children and about the state of relevant research.

Content

The *Report* provides a forum for scholarly reviews and discussions of developmental research and its implications for policies affecting children. The Society recognizes that few policy issues are noncontroversial, that authors may well have a "point of view," but the *Report* is not intended to be a vehicle for authors to advocate particular positions on issues. Presentations should be balanced, accurate, and inclusive. The publication nonetheless includes the disclaimer that the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Society or the editors.

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Three or four reviews are obtained from academic or policy specialists with relevant expertise and different perspectives. Authors then make revisions based on these reviews and the editors' queries, working closely with the editors to arrive at the final form for publication.

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Social Policy Report

Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away

Volume XVII, Number III 2003

Toward an Understanding of Youth in Community Governance: Policy Priorities and Research Directions

Shepherd Zeldin, Linda Camino, and Matthew Calvert

Summary

For more than a decade, many researchers and practitioners have endorsed a "positive youth development" approach, which views adolescents as active contributors to their own development and as assets to their communities. As part of this shift, youth are increasingly being invited to engage in community governance. In youth organizations, schools, community organizations, and public policy arenas, youth are making strong contributions to advisory boards and planning councils, and are integrally involved in key day-to-day functions such as program design, budgeting, outreach, public relations, training, and evaluation.

State and local policy-makers are also beginning to endorse the engagement of youth in community governance. This policy endorsement, however, has largely occurred independent of scholarship on adolescent development. In this *Social Policy Report*, our aim is to help bridge this gap. We discuss the cultural context for youth engagement, theoretical rationales and innovative models, empirical evidence, and priorities for policy and research.

Why involve youth in community governance? Three main theoretical rationales have been established: Ensuring social justice and youth representation, building civil society, and promoting youth development. Moreover, across the country, innovative models demonstrate that the theory can be effectively translated into policy. Finally, a strong research base supports the practice. When youth are engaged in meaningful decision-making—in families, schools, and youth organizations—research finds clear and consistent developmental benefits for the young people. An emerging body of research shows that organizations and communities also derive benefits when youth are engaged in governance.

Several directions need to be pursued for youth engagement to exert a maximum positive impact on young people and their communities. We recommend three areas for policy development. First, public awareness of the practice needs to be better established. Societal expectations for youth remain low and negative stereotypes remain entrenched in the mass media. Second, more stable funding is needed for youth engagement. It will be especially critical to support community-based youth organizations because these places are likely to remain the primary catalysts for youth engagement in the civic life of communities. Third, it is necessary to build local capacity by supporting outreach and training through cross-sector community coalitions and independent, nonprofit intermediary organizations. These entities are best positioned to convince stakeholder groups to chart, implement, and sustain youth engagement.

It is equally important to broaden the scientific context for youth engagement in community governance. Priorities for scholars are to focus research on understanding: the organizational and community outcomes that emanate from engaging youth in governance; the competencies that youth bring to governance; and how the practice of youth engagement can be sustained by communities.

A Publication of the Society for Research in Child Development Article begins on page 3

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From the Editor

This issue addresses a topic about which I feel strongly: Providing youth with responsibilities for organizational governance. This topic is timely in at least two important ways.

First, in recent years, a new perspective has evolved to guide youth research and policy. After decades of studying and attempting to prevent problem behaviors in teens and youth, we have to come to realize that the most productive approach to both research and prevention is the promotion of positive development. This view recognizes that all youth have strengths. Youth differ not only in terms of individual qualities, including resiliency, but in the extent to which their strengths and their potential for healthy, positive development are being promoted by the naturally occurring resources – or developmental assets – in their environments, in the form of families, schools, and communities. Research and policy then focus on differences between environments rather than between individual teenagers. It asks not how we can prevent problems but how we can foster positive outcomes. This SPR, focusing on youth governance, is a direct expression of this positive youth development approach.

Second, there has been a considerable delay in the transition to adulthood in the modern world, at least in industrialized societies. Whereas teenagers are getting involved in risky adult behaviors, such as substance abuse or sexuality, at younger and younger ages, adults are not being afforded opportunities for serious adult responsibilities until later and later ages, usually mid-to-late twenties. Promoting among youth a role in governance reverses this trend. When young people undertake responsibilities, they enter a positive developmental path.

We have now had four issues on youth development: our inaugural issue on "What do Adolescents Need for Healthy Development (14:1)," by Roth and Brooks-Gunn; "Youth Civic Development (15:1)," by Flanagan and Faison; "Strategic Frame Analysis: Reframing America's Views of Youth (15:3)", by Gilliam and Bales; and "Adolescents as Adults in Court (15:4)," by Steinberg and Cauffman. This article on youth governance is then the fifth. This series of articles on youth development should demonstrate how the youth period is just as important to research and policy as early development.

The topic of youth participation is an area where policy is actually ahead of research, although scholarship has increased substantially in the last few years. We need more, careful and rigorous, scientific research on these efforts in order to determine what works, for whom, under what conditions. Such research can then guide the further refinement of policy and programs. We hope that this SPR contributes to promoting research while at the same time encouraging its wider use to inform policy.

Lonnie Sherrod, Ph.D.
Editor

Toward an Understanding of Youth Engagement in Community Governance: Policy Priorities and Research Directions

Shepherd Zeldin, Linda Camino, and Matthew Calvert
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Youth engagement in community governance[1] is currently being advanced as a policy priority for promoting youth development and building healthy communities. The practice and its assumptions, however, have not yet been connected to, or substantially informed by, scholarship on adolescent development. The purpose of this *Social Policy Report* is to bridge that gap. The analysis centers on four questions:

- What is the cultural and policy context for youth engagement in the United States?
- What are the theoretical rationales and innovative models for engaging youth?
- What is the empirical evidence in support of engaging youth in community governance?
- What are some directions for future policy and research?

The Context for Youth in Governance in the United States

Youth were critical to the economic and social vitality of their communities from the days of the early settlement of the United States to the second half of the nineteenth century. They worked with their parents and other adult laborers on farms and in mills, and interacted with them during local celebrations and rituals. This community context changed with the onset of the industrial revolution. As the need for youth labor diminished, and formal schooling became necessary for occupational success, youth became increasingly separated from adults and from the day-to-day lives of their communities. By the beginning of the 20th century, this isolation had been institutionalized through child labor and compulsory education laws (Bakan, 1971). Subsequently, the demands for labor in urban areas, and concurrently, the steady increase in schools' jurisdiction over the time of young people, led to increased physical distance between work settings and households and diminished opportunities for young people to have meaningful interactions with a variety of non-familial adults in the daily social and recreational lives of their communities (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Reese, 1995). The rapid increase in maternal employment has exacerbated these trends over the past thirty years, and has even distanced many young people from their own parents (Steinberg, 1991).

Because of the prolongation of adolescence and their seclusion from adults, youth have gradually lost access to many of society's roles and social networks. Indeed, youths' dominant roles have become limited to those of student, style setter, and consumer (Coleman, 1987; Hine, 1999). While this separation from community roles and responsibilities may offer benefits in terms of providing youth a period of psychosocial moratorium, there are also costs. Society loses the contributions that all youth could make to the well-being of communities, and many adolescents lose the adult guidance and the opportunities for personal development that emanate from taking on valued community roles and responsibilities.

The isolation between youth and adults and the delay in the assumption of adult responsibilities is especially pronounced in political and organizational forums of community decision-making (Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss, 2002; Torney-Purta, Damon, Casey-Cannon, Gardner, Gonzalez, Moore & Wong, 2000). Even when youth are invited to participate in community governance, they are most often expected to conform to strictly prescribed parameters that have been set by adults (Schlegel & Barry, 1991; White & Wyn, 1998). This context is perpetuated, in part, by policy. There are few contemporary policy structures to support youth in community governance (Camino & Zeldin, 2002a; Flanagan & Faison, 2001).

Also contributing to the isolation is that much of the general public, including parents, does not perceive youth as having the values, motivation, or competence to contribute to civic life (Bostrom, 2000; Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992; Zeldin, 2002a). For example, Zeldin and Topitzes (2002) found that less than 25 percent of urban adults had a great deal of confidence that adolescents could represent their community in front of the city council or serve as a voting member of a community organization. In a national study (Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain and colleagues, 2001), adults rated the relative importance of nineteen actions that communities could take on behalf of young people. Significant numbers reported it most important to teach shared values (80 percent), guide decision-making (76 percent) and report misbehavior (62 percent). In contrast, the two actions reflective of youth engagement received the lowest endorsement. Only 48 percent of adults believed it important to "seek young people's opinions when making decisions that affect them." An equivalent percentage reported it is important to "give young people lots of opportunities to make their communities better places." Youth are keenly aware of adult stereotypes and their societal roles, and this awareness negatively influences their own decisions to engage in civic affairs (Camino, 1995; Gilliam & Bales, 2001; Loader, Girling, & Sparks, 1998). As

one youth described her experience in community governance:

> "I was on a school district committee... We would participate in some board meetings. We would talk for half an hour. Then we would leave and they would clap for us. That shows that we weren't really part of the board. If we said anything intelligent, they would say 'ohhhh.' I mean, they wouldn't do that for anyone else on the committee. I think the schools are just doing it for PR so they can announce to the public that kids were involved in decisions." (Zeldin, 2003).

Increasing Policy Support for Youth Engagement

There are countervailing trends. The previous decade saw a noticeable shift in policy toward viewing youth as "community assets" rather than "problems to be prevented" (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2002). As part of this shift, there appears to be an increasingly strong and widespread endorsement of state policies that seek to engage youth in community governance (Forum for Youth Investment, 2002). In setting forth principles of youth development, for example, The National Governor's Association urges that youth be involved in states' decision-making processes, and upwards of twenty states are actively promoting youth engagement in community governance as a fundamental strategy for strengthening their youth policies. Moreover, these states are bringing youth "to the table" to help establish the goals of youth policy. In Vermont, for example, the Agency of Human Services is creating Youth Councils across the state, has placed two student members on the State Board of Education, and is encouraging local school boards to do the same.

Youth engagement is also becoming a local priority. In one national survey, 34 percent of community organizations with a governing board reported that they had youth and young adults (age 15 to 29) serving on the board. Moreover, between 55 and 78 percent of the organizations reported that youth regularly attended meetings where important decisions were made, coordinated activities or events with other organizations, trained other volunteers or staff, gave presentations or speeches to constituencies, and planned or led fund-raisers (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1998). Private foundations and other funding sources are beginning to support such efforts (Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth, 2002). The Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing provides direct grants to youth-led organizations and is establishing learning networks for young people engaged in community change (Sherman, 2002). The United Way of America has recently published a guidebook and training program on engaging youth in local governance. In Milwaukee, after engaging in a comprehensive community assessment, sponsored by the regional United Way, multiple stakeholders identified "youth in decision-making" as a central priority for new funding and programmatic initiatives (Zeldin, Camino, & Calvert, 2002). Finally, there are indications that local officials and residents are endorsing youth engagement. The National 4-H Council recently sponsored "community conversations on youth development" to set priorities for Cooperative Extension. Across the country, youth involvement consistently emerged as a high priority. In Wisconsin, for illustration, the two highest priorities emerging from county conversations, involving 2,100 residents and public officials, were to "create a culture in which youth are equal partners in decision-making and governance" and "encourage youth community service and civic involvement" (Zeldin, Camino, Calvert & Ivey, 2002).

Rationale and Models for Engaging Youth

Scholars have identified three dominant rationales for engaging youth in community governance: ensuring social justice and youth representation, building civil society, and promoting youth development. While the purposes overlap, they reflect fundamentally different emphases in their purposes and goals, and consequently, in their models and supporting policy structures.

Ensuring Social Justice and Youth Representation

The first rationale for youth engagement is that children are subjects with rights in addition to being recipients of adult protection. This social justice rationale, formally acknowledged in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been most fully developed outside the United States and reflects the more advanced political organization of young people in Europe, Australia and Latin America (Hart & Schwab, 1997).[2] Article 12 of the Convention emphasizes that young people are entitled to be active agents in their own lives. It specifically states that all children are capable of expressing a view, and have the right to: (a) articulate their views and express their views freely, (b) be heard in all matters affecting them, including policy matters, and (c) have their views taken seriously in accordance with their age and maturity. Engagement in community decision-making is not considered an end in itself. The Convention notes that "youth voice" allows children to protect themselves better, strengthens their commitment to, and understanding of, democracy, and leads to better policy decisions (Lansdown, 2001).

In the United States, the social justice rationale is evidenced in the representation of youth in forums of public policy deliberation. Most often, youth are offered consultative roles, whereby adults seek to find out about young people's experiences and concerns in order that legislation and

programming be better informed. For example, in Alaska, a core component of the state's Adolescent Health Plan is the promotion of youth representation on agency boards of directors, municipal commissions, foundations, state grant review panels, and school boards. In Missouri, the governor has recently created a 46 member Youth Cabinet charged with providing advice to every state agency from the Department of Economic Development to the Department of Homeland Security. In New Haven, Connecticut, high school students are elected by their peers to the Board of Young Adult Police Commissioners. These commissioners interview applicants as part of the hiring process for new police, and meet with administrators on a regular basis to make recommendations on safety-related policies.

While youth typically serve as consultants to adults, they may also organize within independent structures (Sullivan, 2000). In these self-advocacy models, the primary role of adults is to facilitate, not to lead, and to serve as advisers, administrators, and fund-raisers (Lansdown, 2001). For example, the Center for Young Women's Development in San Francisco provides outreach services to women living and working in the streets. The Center is primarily staffed by young adults under the age of 21, the majority of whom themselves grew up in highly difficult situations. Older adults serve on the board of directors but are not involved in day-to-day operations. Self-advocacy models are most prevalent in the arts and mass media. Across the country, young film makers, theater directors, and newspaper editors are creating pieces that highlight the rights of young people and local disenfranchised groups, and which aim to expose residents to alternative issues and points of view (Forum for Youth Investment, 2001; Lutton, 2002).

Youth Representation in Anti-Smoking Campaigns

Funded by the 1997 tobacco settlement, youth have taken significant roles in anti-smoking campaigns. For example, in each of Florida's 64 counties, youth comprise 25 percent of the voting members of local boards that make decisions about campaign priorities and fund allocations. Thousands of Florida youth have used the internet, print media, and direct action to advance the strategy of "teens talking to teens" (Students Working Against Tobacco, n.d.). Preliminary analyses from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that by the end of the first year of the media campaign, Florida youth had stronger anti-tobacco attitudes and were less likely to smoke than a comparison population (Sly, Heald, & Ray, 2001).

Other states are also implementing "truth" campaigns. Public health messages have typically emphasized the health risks of smoking. The new campaigns, reflecting the perspective of youth, deglamorize smoking. A student in New York, for example, created an advertising spoof on the famous Marlboro Man. Melissa Antonow's poster bears the heading, "Come to Where the Cancer Is." The drawing features a skeleton with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth riding on horseback through a graveyard with mountains in the background. This advertisement was displayed in every subway car in New York City (Youth Activism Project, 2003).

Building Civil Society

A second rationale for youth engagement focuses on civil society. The issue is not primarily one of ensuring youth rights. Instead, the purpose is to balance individual rights with responsibilities to contribute to the common good. The goal, therefore, is to create spaces of social experimentation and solidarity throughout communities so that all members, including youth, have legitimate opportunities to influence decisions made for collective groups (Etzioni, 1998; Flanagan & Faison, 2001). Scholars analyzing youth in governance from this perspective highlight research indicating that that communities work better when the voices and competencies of diverse stakeholders are involved in the identification, leveraging, and mobilization of community resources (Camino & Zeldin, 2002a; Cohen & Arato, 1992; Minkler & Wallerstein, 1997). Others note that citizens who volunteer time and resources as adults were most likely to begin their philanthropy as youth (Independent Sector, 2002).

Efforts to build civil society emphasize partnership models (Camino, 2000; Lansdown, 2001). These models are typically organized around adult-created institutional structures through which youth can influence outcomes in situations of equitable power with adults. The aim is to fashion structures where youth and adults can bring their often different and complementary views, experiences, and talents to collective issues (Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes & Calvert, 2000). For example, in 1997, voters in the City of Oakland established the Kids First! Public Fund which dedicates 2.5 percent of the city's annual unrestricted general fund revenues to youth programs. These funds are allocated by a board with 19 voting members, of whom at

least nine must be youth under the age of 21. "Youth philanthropy" may be the most prevalent illustration of partnership in the United States. Since the emergence of youth philanthropy in the mid-1980's, more than 250 youth philanthropy programs have been identified. Common to each model is that young people manage the grant-making process, with the funds ultimately invested in young "social entrepreneurs" who propose creative solutions to local issues. Adults serve as coaches by offering administrative support and guidance about accepted good practices of philanthropy, but it is the youth board that makes the operational decisions (Chronicle of Philanthropy, 2003; Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth, 2002).

Engaging youth in roles of community research is an increasingly utilized partnership model for engaging young people in building civil society. In this approach, youth identify a school or community issue to research, and then collect, analyze and interpret the data. Adults serve as technical assistance providers to youth on issues of methodology, and then offer guidance to the youth as they disseminate their conclusions and recommendations to the appropriate community forums (Harvard Family Research Project, 2002). Other approaches emphasize governance in youth organizations. In one model, youth and adults administer and analyze self-assessments of their organizations, typically on issues of youth voice and youth-adult relationships. Subsequently, after training in group facilitation, a core steering group of youth and staff lead their organizational peers through a presentation and interpretation of the data, and then work collectively to enact identified priorities (Camino, Zeldin & Sherman, 2003).

Youth-Adult Partnerships in City Government

Since 1990, Hampton, Virginia has infused youth into many aspects of policy-making, and, consequently, is creating a community culture with norms and structures that promote youth engagement. Some of the ways that youth are engaged include: 24 young people serve on a youth commission, youth are employed in city departments, the superintendent and all principals have youth advisory groups, there are youth-police partnerships in neighborhoods, and youth serve on almost all city boards, commissions, and committees. According to Cindy Carlson, director of the Hampton Coalition for Youth [a government office], "You can't do anything around here without asking for youth input." Critical to the success of Hampton are youth-adult partnerships. Youth are viewed as bringing unique perspectives and expertise to policy-making. To bring this potential to fruition, Hampton emphasizes the training and preparation of youth to ensure that all young people have the skills and confidence to effectively deliberate with public officials (Mason & Goll, 2000).

Promoting Youth Development

A third rationale for engaging youth in governance is that active participation in one's own learning is fundamental to healthy development. From this perspective, engagement primarily serves a socialization function, with the major purpose being to provide individual youth with structured and challenging experiences in the context of planning and taking action on behalf of others who are in a state of need. The expected outcomes for youth include identity development, group membership and responsibility, initiative, peer and adult relationships, and skill development (Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002; McLaughlin, 2000). Youth engagement is also viewed as a vehicle for the development of civic competence. As youth interact within democratic institutions, the expectation is that they will gain the full array of competencies that will allow them to promote their interests as adults (Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best & colleagues, 2002).

The youth development rationale builds from Vgyotsky's (1978) concept of scaffolding, with the emphasis on providing young people with progressively more complex roles in schools, communities, and adult society. This requires that programming be fashioned to create a goodness-of-fit between the opportunities provided and the developmental needs and interests of a given youth (Eccles, J., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C., Flanagan, C. & MacIver, D., 1993). As youth succeed in one governance function or decision-making activity, they are subsequently given opportunities to engage in other roles that necessitate higher-order skill or responsibility. Because the goal is to provide all youth with decision-making opportunities, programs seek to "infuse" youth into all decision-making forums within a community, thus allowing a maximum amount of options for creating a fit for young people (Zeldin et al., 2000).

Creating Structural Change to Support Youth Engagement

Wendy Wheeler, Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development

At the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, it has become clear to us that, in order for youth-adult collaboration in leadership to succeed, organizations need to go beyond inviting young people to leadership; they need to change fundamental structures to support that invitation. Each structural change addresses a fundamental shift in assumptions about adult privilege and youth responsibility, a shift that must occur in order for youth to participate genuinely in leadership and civic engagement.

We've found that organizations need to shift structures for communication, meeting planning, executive leadership and even in some cases meeting times to support the full participation of young people in decision-making processes. One prominent example of such a structural shift is the National 4H Council. The Council's work centers around support for 4-H and the Cooperative Extension System, and as such its primary connection and responsibility is to Extension youth workers. In 1998, the Council's national board added ten youth members, bringing the total to twelve people age twelve to twenty-two on a 36-member board. In that case, the board undertook a careful exploration of its own dynamics, and made the decision to create a leadership position of Vice Chair for Mission and Board Performance. Having made that decision, the 4-H Council board wrote into the governance policy that the new position must be filled with a youth member. As a result of not only the inclusion of youth on the board, but in significant leadership positions, the board has developed a more complete set of perspectives, enabling it to better serve its primary constituency.

Structural changes can address the stereotypes and power issues identified by Zeldin, Camino, and Calvert in this *Social Policy Report*. As they point out, adults are not accustomed to sharing power with young people, nor are young people accustomed to sharing power with adults. We have found that this dynamic requires that communication structures must be created and clearly defined such that both youth and adults are comfortable making use of them. Adults are often not as familiar with email and the Internet, for example, as their youth colleagues, who move in a world in which such communication is more common, and more culturally important, than the telephone. A thoughtful look at meeting times and process is also crucial to the effective integration of youth and adults in decision-making. If young people are in school, meeting times must accommodate their school and homework schedules, as well work or extracurricular activities, along with the schedules of adults. Likewise, some organizations have opted for a process that intentionally creates room for young people to speak before adults. At the Coalition for Asian and Pacific American Youth in Boston, for example, adult leaders don't weigh in on any decisions until the youth board has finished their discussion.

Empirical Support for Youth Engagement in Governance

Despite endorsements and the strong theoretical rationale, the practice of youth engagement remains unfamiliar to most policy makers and local leaders, and their collective experience is limited (Zeldin, 2003). Moreover, they have questions, the most fundamental being: What are the benefits of youth engagement to young people and to communities? Research on this question has been slow in coming (Torney-Purta, 1990), but the trend may be reversing, with a multi-disciplinary body of research beginning to accumulate (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998).

Decision-Making in Families

There are extensive data showing that adolescent development is promoted when parents encourage young people to develop and express their own opinions and beliefs, in a context of warmth and firmness (Steinberg, 2001). Eccles et al., (1993), for example, report positive associations between the extent of adolescents' participation in family decision-making with school motivation, self-esteem, and adjustment during the elementary to junior high school transition. Grotevant and Cooper (1986) similarly found that adolescents who are allowed to assert themselves and participate in family discussions within a context of mutuality—that is, parents and adolescents acknowledge each others' viewpoints—are most likely to score higher on measures of identity and role-taking skills than parents and adolescents who do not acknowledge one another's views. The associations are particularly strong when adolescents are afforded the chance to define and reflect on the parameters of a given issue (Olson, Cromwell & Klein, 1975; Smetana, 1988). Participating in family decision-making through action, not only deliberation, also appears to benefit adolescent development. Jarrett's (1995) literature review concludes that the assignment of early family responsibilities, when properly managed, encourages mastery, enhances self-esteem, and facilitates family cohesion. Among children from low-income families, for example, the review found that the most "successful" youth had parents who intentionally challenged them to use their skills and competencies in the home, such as assisting in and executing domestic and childcare responsibilities.

Diverse Options for Engagement Sponsored by a Youth Organization

The philosophy of the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) in San Francisco is that all youth have the competence to engage in community governance and deserve the opportunity to participate. To that end, YLI creates diverse options for engagement. For example, 60 young people serve on eight community philanthropy boards and grant out $200,000 annually to youth-led projects. Other youth serve on training teams and provide workshops on issues such as youth governance, public policy, and youth-adult partnerships. Youth and adult staff worked together to develop survey tools and methodologies which are now used to help YLI evaluate its own programs and those of other organizations (Zeldin et al., 2000).

Critical to YLI's success is that they seek to match the changing interests and abilities of youth by presenting them with different options. This occurs in two ways. First, youth can progress to more complex and responsible roles within the organization. For example, a young person who learned and excelled in the planning of several community projects now serves on YLI's board of directors and is a trainer for the organization. Other youth transition from engagement in highly structured opportunities to taking leadership in more autonomous projects. For example, one young person started out as a grant decision-maker on a philanthropy board. After that role was mastered, he engaged in the more challenging roles of conference presenter and reviewer of training materials (Rosen, 2003).

Decision-Making in Schools

Efforts to elicit the voice of students in decision-making are often constrained by schools' focus on academic performance and by the risk of losing order (Fullan, 2001). When youth are given the opportunity to participate, however, positive outcomes are observed, especially when teachers engage them in shared inquiry and service learning in the context of a collective purpose (Andersen, 1997; Melchior, 1997; Yates & Youniss, 1996). Newmann and Associates (1996), for example, found that positive academic outcomes were facilitated in secondary schools when teachers engaged students in the construction of knowledge and where a norm existed that valued community connections as well as academic learning. In addition, academic test performance and SES academic inequity were found to be diminished in schools which used these authentic instructional strategies (Lee, Smith & Croninger, 1997).

Involvement in extracurricular activities, which often gives youth a chance for decision-making in a structured setting, may also contribute to positive youth outcomes (Mahoney & Cairnes, 1997). Rutter, Maugham, Mortimer, & Ouston (1979) found that schools in which a high proportion of students held some position of responsibility, such as student government or taking active roles in student assemblies had better outcomes in behavior and academic achievement. Similarly, Eccles and Barber (1999) conclude that participation may promote academic achievement and prevent involvement in risky behaviors, especially when involvement entails "prosocial activities" and "performing arts." Participation in school activities has also been found to contribute to esteem building and positive school attachment, which in turn, contributes to a wide range of achievement and favorable behavioral outcomes (Finn, 1989; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999).

Decision-Making in Youth Organizations

There is accumulating evidence that youth benefit when given the opportunity to make, and act on, decisions for the common good in youth organizations and programs. The American Youth Policy Forum (1999, p.iv), for example, after synthesizing 18 evaluations of effective programs, concluded that a common aspect was that "youth not only receive services, but provide them. In this way, they change from participants into partners, from being cared for, into key resources for their communities. This change in approach helps build youth resiliency and protective factors in powerful ways." Other reviews of youth development programs indicate the following to be common across effective programs: the opportunity to develop self-efficacy, to contribute to others, to participate actively in real challenges, and to produce a recognizable program or achievement (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1998; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray and Foster (1998). Similarly, Hattie, Neill, & Richards (1997) conclude from their meta-analysis of adventure programs that the positive effects on youth development stem from the experience of actively participating in challenging group problem-solving and decision-making situations.

Recent studies have sought to identify the full range of outcomes that youth perceive that they gain from their engagement. For many Chilean student researchers, for example, the dominant outcome was a positive feeling that they had contributed to "a better society in which everyone was committed to the rights, duties and responsibilities of democratic living" (Prieto, 2001:88). Larson, Hansen & Walker (2002) describe the learning outcomes of high school youth in a Future Farmers of America chapter as they engaged in planning a summer camp for 4th graders. Two domains of learning processes were identified in most of the students' accounts of their experiences: learning instrumentality, or setting a goal and working to accomplish it, and teamwork. Zeldin (2003), found that a majority of youth involved in organizational governance were led to explore their identity and acquired community connections, both instrumental and emotional. Illustrative examples include:

> Bad experiences in the system gave me a poor self-image. If asked to describe myself before, I would say "I'm Jenine [not her real name] and I've been locked up this many times." Working here helped me reconstruct who I am so I'm able to speak and not be afraid of people. I can debate ideas and not be afraid of myself.

> I have a totally different outlook on my community. Before I thought, what can I possibly do? Why would adults want to listen to me? But working here showed me that adults are willing to listen and take you seriously. Before I thought there was nothing here but school and jobs, but now I'm more politically aware of what's going on.

Influences of Youth Engagement on Community Settings

There are numerous case examples that illustrate the ways that youth can have positive effects on their environments, but there is scant empirical research. Insight may be gained from research on families. During adolescence, parent-child relationships undergo transformations in roles and responsibilities, with a significant shift toward mutuality in decision-making. These shifts are dramatic, but still reflect continuity with the past (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). It is likely that youth may impact social organizations through similar negotiation processes. Sabo (in press), for example, observed that organizational transformations occurred as youth moved from peripheral roles to roles of full participation. Youth brought their own understandings and expectations to institutional roles, which, in turn, led the organization to conceptualize the roles in new ways. Similarly, when youth are engaged as researchers in schools and communities, studies indicate that the culture and content of decision-making undergoes incremental, yet noteworthy, changes and that youth interests are more keenly reflected in deliberations (Kirshner, Fernandez, & Strobel, 2002; Mitra, 2001).

As changes in organizational context occur, policy modifications are also enacted. Fielding's (2001) four year study of youth as educational researchers, for example, showed that, after initial resistance, the engagement of youth contributed to improvements in curriculum and classroom practice. Similarly, Zeldin (2003) found that adult leaders in youth organizations reported making better decisions with

Age Segregation and the Rights of Children

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A strong presumption of this commentary on youth civic engagement is that adults in our society view adolescents in generally negative terms. If this is true, then it means that the practice of fostering youth engagement must overcome significant barriers of stigma and prejudice directed to young people. But, might this presumption be overstated? The results of a Search Institute study are referenced by Zeldin, Camino, and Calvert; in this study, about one half of adults were in favor of providing some form of guided participation in civic engagement for adolescents. Only half, however, appeared to be comfortable in proactively seeking their thoughts and suggestions. How does one interpret such results? Is the glass half empty or half full? With the reservation of wanting to know more about the cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of the sample, I would assert that these results reflect the ambiguous attitudes of adults towards adolescents.

This ambiguity is in no doubt a response to age segregation. But, the resistance towards youth participation is only partially determined by the segregation and negative stereotyping of adolescents. Potentially of equal or greater relevance is the functional status of our democracy. It is not fair to expect that youth should be more engaged in civic concerns and local politics than are adults? Since we cannot compare voting behavior between the two age groups, the comparison has to be made on the basis of participation in civic activities and public deliberation in the matters of direct concern. It is at this level that one should maintain an empirical and open-minded stance. How do the concerns of youth, age 14 to 17, on matters of school policy compare to the concerns of young adults on matters of taxation?

Yet, asking the question this way pinpoints the underlying problem. The finding that the majority of adults are interested in supporting the opinions and decisions of adolescents is good news. But, what activities and structures support such adult to child partnership in civic engagement? More importantly, what principles, frameworks and guidelines do we possess to achieve such partnerships? The problem is only partly due to self-segregation. Segregation by default is just as powerful.

There are two solutions. First, as is the case for adults, youth engagement requires youth leadership. By leadership, I mean persons who are willing to take political and social initiative and commit themselves to the pursuit of an issue. Although youth leaders may be discovered just as spontaneously as adult leaders, more attention is needed in the education and training of youth leaders as in part of school and community based politics. This issue was addressed, but it merits even greater emphasis. Just as leaders are trained in parliamentary rules, training is also desirable in procedural ethics, such as those delineated in Habermas' theory of communicative action.

The first recommendation of Zeldin, Camino, and Calvert addresses the Convention on the rights of children. The participatory rights of the CRC (articles 12 to 15) are the most radical of its claims. These rights have been accepted by the entire world, with the exception of Somalia and the United States. Would matters be any different for American adolescents if our Congress had ratified the CRC? Whatever is the answer to this question, the United States stands apart from the global community. There is a great deal of learning and sharing of practices from which to benefit. The analysis of where American youth stand with regard to the civic life of their communities and schools should benefit from insights gleaned through international experiences. We should be as ready to learn through "reverse transfer" as we are to sell others on American ideals. The CRC represents a new and radical departure from previous manuscripts on the nature of childhood. It deserves to be a centerpiece for reflection and critical evaluation if its virtues are ever to be fully realized. The practice of democracy and the recognition of citizenship are not reserved for persons over 18. Youth participation needs to be sufficiently political to be deemed genuine and legitimate.

increased confidence as they became more connected with youth through the processes of shared governance. Additionally, youth engagement led some organizations to reflect on issues of representation, which led to improved outreach to, and more appropriate programming for, diverse constituencies. There were ripple effects throughout the community. As some of the organizations gained visibility through their youth engagement and community outreach efforts, they established new standards for other organizations and local foundations.

Students as Educational Researchers

Since 1996, Sharnbrook Upper School in Bedfordshire, England, has partnered with Michael Fielding of Cambridge University to engage students as educational researchers. Each year, about 30 students and four staff receive training in research methods and ethics. Work groups are formed to identify issues of importance to the shared goal of school improvement. Data are then gathered and analyzed. Interpretation occurs in an intentional context of collegiality between students and teachers. Many changes in school policy have resulted, for example: "trainee teachers" are better supervised, curriculum governance structures now include youth as members, the school's assessment and profiling system has been improved, and greater responsibilities and institutional support have been granted to the student council (Fielding, 2001).

After initial faculty resistance, the program is now institutionalized within the school. This is because the school nurtured the process. The school deliberately expanded the scope and depth of involvement of the program over time. The student role progressed incrementally from data source to active respondents and then to their current status as co- and independent researchers. Consequently, teachers developed an appreciation for research-based student feedback. The knowledge that research is taken seriously, and the modeling of the youth-adult teams, has created an ethos of respect that sustains the engagement of students and faculty (Crane, 2001).

Policy Priorities

Over 50 years ago, Hollingshead (1949, p. 108) observed that United States' policy tends to "segregate children from the real world that adults know and function in. By trying to keep the maturing child ignorant of this world of conflict and contradictions, adults think they are keeping him pure." It is fair to conclude that this analysis holds true today. The notion that youth should, or even can, be engaged in community governance is not embedded within the United States culture or policy. At the same time, it is also evident that the practice of engaging youth in governance, at its best[3], has reached a level of sophistication and quality that is deserving of policy support. Within this context, we recommend three major areas for strengthening policy and practice. We also identify three major directions for future research.

Establish a Vision and Maximize Public Awareness of Youth Engagement

It is most critical that policy analysts and scholars work with policy-makers to create a solid public awareness of youth engagement in community governance. Putting forth youth in governance as a public idea, or as a vision of what is possible and desirable, represents a fundamental step in garnering broad based support for the practice. In Britain, for illustration, the Children's Rights Alliance has brought together close to 200 organizations committed to promoting children's rights based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada has included children at the provincial and local levels in developing their required national plan of action in response to the Convention (UNICEF, 2002). The Convention, or similar proclamations, could provide a context for policy education and a focal point for mobilization in the United States as well (Cutler & Frost, 2001; Hart & Schwab, 1997). One example is the city of Hampton, Virginia, which in 1993, officially adopted and widely disseminated a vision for youth engagement which has subsequently directed the city's policy and programming for over a decade (Goll, 2003):

> All young people are entitled to be heard and respected as citizens of the community. They deserve to be prepared, active participants, based on their level of maturity, in community service, government, public policy, or other decision-making which affects their well-being.

Policy-makers, of course, are confronted with competing agendas. Until a more diverse array of constituency groups endorse youth engagement as critical to their interests, it is unlikely that a critical mass of support will emerge to garner sustained policy support. To that end, it will be necessary to shift societal expectations for youth, especially given that

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Making the Point: The Future of Research on Youth Participation[1]

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The publication of a *Social Policy Report* devoted to youth participation reflects the *zeitgeist* within the research and practitioner communities to focus on the means through which positive development may be promoted among young people. This focus on bases of positive youth development (PYD) constitutes nothing short of a paradigm shift within the youth serving community, a change from viewing, through a deficit lens, young people as problems to be managed to, in current basic and applied scholarship, conceiving of all youth as having strengths and thus as resources to be developed (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, & Foster, 1998). Youth who are actively engaged in making positive contributions to civil society are seen as reflecting one or more of the "Five Cs" of PYD (i.e., competence, confidence, character, social connection, and caring/compassion). Indeed, youth participation and leadership are often noted to be key features of programs that are effective in enhancing these features of PYD (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, in press; Roth, et al., 1998).

Moreover, youth participation, especially in community leadership roles, has been conceptualized as potentially reflecting the integration of moral and civic dimensions of identity in adolescence (Lerner, et al., in press). When such identity is fostered in communities rich in assets that constitute the essential developmental "nutrients" for positive development (Benson, 1997), exemplary positive development – thriving – is believed to occur (Lerner, et al., in press).

Accordingly, there is a considerable burden placed on youth participation in models of PYD and, as well, practitioners stress that the promotion of youth participation will enhance the probability of successful outcomes of their programs. However, as made clear in the present *Social Policy Report*, considerable additional data need to be collected before certain specification can be made of the precise impact of youth participation on the quality of institutional and community life and, in turn, on the characteristics of PYD. What is needed empirically is theoretically-predicated longitudinal data that identifies (1) what operationalizations of youth participation; (2) have what (expected) impacts; on (3) what organizations or facets of community life; and on (4) what features of youth development; for (5) what youth (e.g., youth varying along dimensions of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, and family structure); living in (6) what sorts of communities (e.g., communities varying in regard to socioeconomic status, geographic location, and rural versus urban location).

We are in a scientific era wherein theory predicated on the systemic bases of plasticity in human development legitimates a vocabulary of strength and optimism for health in depicting the development of young people. Such theory accounts for developmental change by focusing on relations among diverse levels of organization within the ecology of human development, and stresses the diversity of developmental outcomes that may be derived from the relations among levels of the developmental system (Lerner, 2002). These theoretical ideas underscore the need to develop policies and program that capitalize on the plasticity of development in manners sensitive to this diversity. Applied developmental scientists must act now to couple such ideas with methodologically rigorous, multivariate longitudinal and change-sensitive research to ascertain if there exists a goodness of fit between the theoretical bases of PYD and empirically enhancing youth development through promoting participation and leadership in civic life.

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negative stereotypes remain entrenched in the mass media (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). One strategy, outlined by Bogenschneider (2002), is to regularly sponsor nonpolitical forums among scholars, policy-makers, agency staff. In such forums, scholars could provide relevant research and examples of youth engagement, and agency staff and practitioners could offer examples to legitimize the research. Ultimately, however, it will be necessary to engage in grassroots outreach. Lansdown (2001, p.15), in summarizing lessons from international experience, concludes that policy change occurs through relationships, particularly when scholars and policy analysts "invest time in working with adults in key positions of power, for example, head teachers, the police, local politicians, to persuade them of the benefits of a more open and democratic relationship with children and young people."

Provide Stable Funding for Places that Engage Youth

There currently exist five major pathways for youth participation in the United States: (a) public policy consultation, (b) community coalition involvement, (c) youth in organizational decision-making, (d) youth organizing, and (e) school-based service-learning. Of these, the only one with significant policy support is service-learning, and this itself is relatively new (Camino & Zeldin, 2002a). For each pathway, however, there are innovative models that can be replicated (see Endnote 3). The challenge to policy-makers is to provide financial resources for these pathways and models. It is most critical to support community-based youth organizations since these places are likely to remain the primary catalysts for youth engagement in the civic life of communities. They deserve stable sources of public support, but funding, such as has been experienced by service-learning, remains elusive (Finance Project, no date).

Build Local Capacity To Engage Youth

It will also be necessary to build local capacity by supporting cross-sector community coalitions and independent, nonprofit intermediary organizations. These entities convene stakeholder groups with the aim being to chart, implement and sustain youth development (Camino, 1998; National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2001), and therefore have the potential to effectively promote youth engagement in governance (Sherman, 2002). For example, they can describe youth engagement for the community, in the context of disseminating exemplary national models and local success stories. Another fundamental role is the provision of training for adults and youth. Examining attitudes, building youth-adult partnerships, and clearly articulating the purposes of youth engagement are all important in building local capacity to carry out successful endeavors (Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss, 2002).

Research Directions

Research and practice have made almost independent contributions to our understanding of youth engagement. Building theory through the integration of research and practice will likely maximize our knowledge base of positive adolescent effects, while at the same time, demonstrating how to promote such effects. The challenge is for scholars to connect their agendas with the innovative practice that is occurring in the field of youth development (Zeldin, 2000).

Focus Research on the Adolescent Effects on Communities

It will be necessary for scholars to explore the full range of outcomes that may arise from engaging youth. Examining the influences that youth have on adult and organizational development—as well as their own growth—will likely have a significant influence on policy deliberations, especially in the current environment of heightened accountability. Such studies will also have relevance for theory-building. Youth are both products and producers of the settings in which they engage, and these reciprocal processes provide a basis for their own development as well as for others. Available research, however, focuses primarily on the "child effects" of young children. Researching "adolescent effects," especially as they may occur in youth organizations, would advance our knowledge of development since such settings stand out, relative to others in the United States, as places where youth can be purposeful agents of their own development (Larson, 2000; Zeldin, 2003).

Identify the Competencies that Youth Bring to Governance

Counter to public beliefs, many youth, by the age of 15, can contribute substantially to community governance. They can identify a set of alternative courses of action, assess alternatives by criteria, evaluate contingencies, summarize information about alternatives, and evaluate decision-making processes. Many can also assess risks, sometimes more accurately than young adults (Mann, Harmoni & Power, 1989; Millstein & Halpern-Felsher, 2002). Nonetheless, negative assumptions about youth competencies continue to impact policy development. Scholars should strengthen policy by disseminating research-based portrayals of the developmental strengths and limitations that youth bring to governance at different ages. In addition to informing policy, delineating the capabilities of youth, especially in terms of how these competencies are displayed in naturalistic collective decision-making settings, would enhance our scientific understanding of the cognitive, affective, and social competencies of young people.[4]

Understand how to Sustain the Innovative Practice of Youth Engagement

Youth engagement is an emerging and innovative practice in the United States. Increasingly, scholars and practitioners have made progress in describing its models and best practices. It is important to continue this research, while concurrently broadening the focus to examine how innovative practices are sustained in larger systems, such as organizations and communities. Unfortunately, there is little research on the diffusion of innovation in the field of youth development generally (Granger, 2002; Light, 1998), and we are not aware of any research that specifically addresses youth engagement. Practical data on the diffusion and sustainability of youth engagement in community governance will be critical to inform future policy-making.

Conclusions

"Adolescence is, among other things, an organized set of expectations closely tied to the structure of adult society" (Modell & Goodman, 1990, p. 93). Other scholars have made similar observations (Hollingshead, 1949; Schlegel & Barry, 1991; Steinberg, 1991). The scholarship reviewed here demonstrates that policy structures, places, and adult expectations can be refashioned to support youth engagement[3], and additionally, that such conditions may facilitate a range of benefits for youth and their communities. Further, as we move into the 21st century, the scholarship indicates that momentum is building to integrate youth into the civic life of their communities and to increase adult expectations for the participation of youth.

What does the theory and research discussed here mean for such a shift? First, it means that youth should be afforded more authentic opportunities to engage in civic life. It is important to emphasize, however, that community decision-making is a collective construct, not an individual one, emanating from social interactions within a group. Simply put, youth cannot learn civic decision-making in programs that focus only on individual values and outcomes. Second, when communities provide an adequate degree of support, youth are capable of far more than society currently expects. As the case examples and research here indicate, youth can often accomplish extraordinary things with competence, energy, and compassion. The key, however, is the phrase "an adequate degree of support." Adroitness in collective decision-making and governance is neither an intrinsic talent nor a set of skills per se; learning to do so requires a blend of engagement, participation, and support. Without adequate support, youth are at risk of falling well below their full potential.

Finally, while research has been conducted that contributes to supporting the practice and policy of youth engagement, there are more directions to pursue. Future directions should build logically on the current foundations. Focusing more sharply on the effects that adolescent engagement can exert on communities, and identifying the competencies that youth bring to governance are two examples of needed directions. Also still open is the question of scale: how can states and local communities garner the will and capacity to create and sustain the structures and spaces that bring out and promote youth voice and competencies? Scholars and policy analysts need to tackle this question more squarely. As they do so, the practice and policy of youth engagement will increasingly be able to ensure youth representation for all youth, build a strong civil society, and promote a full range of developmental outcomes.

Endnotes

[1]As in any emerging area of research and practice, a consensus on conceptualization and language does not yet exist. By "engagement in community governance," we refer to those places and forums within local organizations and public systems where youth are meaningfully involved in significant decisions regarding the goals, design, and implementation of the community's work. We use the word "youth" to generally include young people between the ages of 14 to 21. This choice reflects common usage among practitioners who are engaging young people in the highest levels of community governance, such as sitting on boards of directors or influential advisory groups (Zeldin et al., 2000). It also reflects the awareness that the developmental tasks facing older adolescents may be theoretically and programmatically distinct from their younger adolescent peers and from young adults (Arnett, 2000). We do stress, however, that younger adolescents can, and often do, contribute to the equally important day-to-day decision-making lives of organizations and of families (see Endnote 3).

[2]The United States is one of only two countries that has not yet ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[3]Youth policy, research, training, and advocacy organizations have begun to assemble program descriptions and listings of "best practices" on youth engagement in community governance. Useful web sites include: Activism 2000 Project (www.youthactivism.com); Children's Rights Alliance for England (www.crights.org.uk), Forum for Youth Investment (www.forumforyouthinvestment.org) Innovation Center for

Community and Youth Development (www.theinnovationcenter.org); John Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities (gardnercenter.stanford.edu), UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (www.unicef-icdc.org); What Kids Can Do (www.whatkidscando.org); and Youth on Board (www.youthonboard.org).

[4]We are not suggesting that youth are naturally adept at decision-making. Almost all youth (and many adults) lack extensive experience in collaborative decision-making groups. However, policy analysts and practitioners have often observed that most young people, with experience and support, can quickly enhance their performance and make better use of their cognitive capacities, such as understanding future time and planning sequential tasks, over the long-term. It is unfortunate that there are few studies that examine decision-making among youth in collaboration with adults.

[5]We do not wish to underestimate the challenges of implementing high quality youth engagement strategies. As scholars, we have previously identified the challenges facing organizations. As practitioners, we have directly experienced them. It is beyond the scope of this Report to discuss these issues. We note, however, that creating organizational conditions to promote youth engagement involves a myriad of tasks, ranging from changing norms and structures, to providing quality training to staff and youth, to addressing issues of institutional and personal power (Camino, 2000; Camino & Zeldin, 2002b; Camino, Zeldin, & Sherman, 2003; Zeldin, 2002b; Zeldin et al., 2000; see also Fine, 1989; Hogan, 2002; McLellan & Youniss, 2003; Endnote 3).

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Content

The Report provides a forum for scholarly reviews and discussions of developmental research and its implications for policies affecting children. The Society recognizes that few policy issues are noncontroversial, that authors may well have a "point of view," but the Report is not intended to be a vehicle for authors to advocate particular positions on issues. Presentations should be balanced, accurate, and inclusive. The publication nonetheless includes the disclaimer that the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Society or the editors.

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Three or four reviews are obtained from academic or policy specialists with relevant expertise and different perspectives. Authors then make revisions based on these reviews and the editors' queries, working closely with the editors to arrive at the final form for publication.

Social Policy Report

Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away

Volume XVII, Number IV 2003

Juveniles' Competence to Stand Trial as Adults

Laurence Steinberg, Thomas Grisso, Jennifer Woolard, Elizabeth Cauffman, Elizabeth Scott, Sandra Graham, Fran Lexcen, N. Dickon Reppucci, and Robert Schwartz

Summary

During the 1990s, nationwide legal reforms lowered the age at which youths could be tried in adult criminal court and expanded the range of young offenders subject to adult adjudication and punishment. The present study asked whether, to what extent, and at what ages juveniles may be more at risk than adults for incompetence as legal defendants in criminal trials. Participants in the study, half of whom were in juvenile detention facilities or adult jails, and half of whom were drawn from the community, included nearly 1,000 juveniles aged 11 to 17 and nearly 500 young adults aged 18 to 24. Participants were administered a structured interview that has been used in research on competence to stand trial among mentally ill adults as well as a new interview designed to assess legal decision-making. The results of this study indicate that, based on criteria established in studies of mentally ill adult offenders, approximately one-third of 11- to 13-year-olds and approximately one-fifth of 14- to 15-year-olds are as impaired in capacities that affect their competence to stand trial as are seriously mentally ill adults who would likely be considered incompetent. In addition, immaturity may affect the performance of youths as defendants in ways that extend beyond the elements of understanding and reasoning that are explicitly relevant under the law to competence to stand trial. Compared to young adults, adolescents are more likely to comply with authority figures and less likely to recognize the risks inherent in the various choices they face or to consider the long-term consequences of their legal decisions. This study confronts policymakers and courts with an uncomfortable reality: Under well-accepted constitutional restrictions on the state's authority to adjudicate those charged with crimes, many young offenders—particularly among those under the age of 14—may not be appropriate subjects for criminal adjudication.

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From the Editor

This issue presents a second paper from the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice. The XV, number 4 issue of SPR by Steinberg and Cauffman reviewed research literature addressing adolescents' immature developmental status and the implications for the treatment of juveniles by the justice system.

In this article the Network presents research evidence on juveniles' risk for incompetence when compared to adults as legal defendants in criminal trials. The study reported in this issue provides evidence that a substantial proportion of 11-15 year old teens are no more qualified to be tried in court than are mentally ill persons. This is convincing evidence that adolescents should not be subject to the adult criminal system based only on the nature of the crime they commit. The ideology that promotes treating juveniles as adults is powerful when the crime is heinous as in murder. Nonetheless if we wish to function as an enlightened society we must resist the temptation toward revenge and instead treat children as children if they show child rather than adult competencies. It should be the individual's competency to stand trial that determines in what court they are tried, not the nature of the crime or other such factors.

It is unusual for the Social Policy Report to present original evidence as in a journal article. However, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and I believed that this data had such powerful implications for policy that it had to be presented in a vehicle such as the Report that reaches a larger audience than just researchers.

In this study, the Network used a research tool developed by an earlier network to evaluate teens' competency. They are currently developing an interview protocol that might be used by courts or other arms of the justice system to assess teens' competency to stand trial.

The juvenile justice system originated more than one hundred years ago because it was then recognized that children and teens have different competencies than adults to stand trial and that they may be more effectively rehabilitated. This was before there was a field of child development research or an SRCD. We now have a considerable body of research to support the original idea of juvenile justice. This article presents the latest and most direct evidence, but the field has much more to offer. We cannot undo more than 100 years of history and close to 100 years of research just because children have access to weapons that allow them to execute adult crimes. We may need to address their access to such weapons as well but certainly we should NOT ignore everything research and history has taught us about the nature of children.

Lonnie R. Sherrod, Editor

Juveniles' Competence to Stand Trial as Adults

Laurence Steinberg, Thomas Grisso, Jennifer Woolard, Elizabeth Cauffman, Elizabeth Scott, Sandra Graham, Fran Lexcen, N. Dickon Reppucci, and Robert Schwartz

During the 1990s, nationwide legal reforms lowered the age at which youths could be tried in adult criminal court and expanded the range of young offenders subject to adult adjudication and punishment (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). These legal developments raise an important issue that has received surprisingly little attention from experts in child development: whether youths charged with crimes have the developmental capacities needed to participate effectively in criminal trials. Although precise data on the numbers of juveniles at different ages who are tried in adult court each year are not available (in part because criminal courts do not systematically record the ages of defendants), the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that about 200,000 individuals under 18 are tried as adults each year and that this number has increased over the past decade. The vast majority of juveniles who are tried as adults are 16 or older, but many are as young as 11.

It is well established that a criminal proceeding meets the constitutional requirements of due process only when the defendant is competent to stand trial, which includes capacities to assist counsel and to understand the nature of the proceeding sufficiently to participate in it and make decisions about rights afforded all defendants (*Dusky v. U.S.*, 1960; *Godinez v. Moran*, 1993). Although courts and legislatures in some states have determined that youths adjudicated in criminal court must be competent to stand trial, the conventional standard that has been applied focuses on mental illness and disability. In general, there has been little recognition that youths in criminal court may be incompetent due to developmental immaturity (Bonnie & Grisso, 2000; Redding & Frost, 2002). We do not know whether, and to what extent, juveniles' competence is evaluated by courts, how these evaluations are conducted, or how information derived from them is being used, but our own preliminary investigation into this issue (a telephone survey of juvenile court clinics in the nation's 100 largest jurisdictions) indicates that requests for competence evaluations of young defendants are on the rise. According to our survey, some jurisdictions perform as many as 200 juvenile competence assessments annually.

The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that about 200,000 individuals under 18 are tried as adults each year and that this number has increased over the past decade.

Information about youths' competence to stand trial is needed for several reasons. First, states need guidance for the development of meaningful laws in this area. The doctrine regulating competence in court has focused on adult criminal defendants impaired by mental illness and mental retardation. Yet basic research on cognitive and psychosocial development suggests that some youths will manifest deficits in legally-relevant abilities similar to deficits seen in adults with mental disabilities, but for reasons of immaturity rather than mental disorder (see generally, Grisso & Schwartz, 2000). If there were empirical evidence for this, it would suggest that the criminal law should take immaturity into consideration when evaluating the adjudicative competence of youths in criminal court.

Second, practitioners need information about youths' capacities as trial defendants. Prosecutors and defense attorneys must make case-by-case decisions about whether to raise this issue. Mental health professionals who are asked to perform evaluations of youths' competence need guidance regarding the potential implications of youths' developmental status for assessing deficits in the legally relevant abilities. This may require attention to different constructs (immaturity, not only disorder) and a different logic (e.g., the "achievement" rather than "restoration" of competence among those found incompetent) than in adult competence evaluations prompted by putative mental illnesses. Finally, judges need guidance in interpreting the law in order to protect young defendants who may be incompetent, especially in their abilities to make decisions to waive important rights in the context of their potentially immature perspectives regarding the implications of their choices.

Past analyses of the legal concept of competence to stand trial have outlined the specific functional abilities about which the law is concerned (Grisso, 2002). These abilities focus on the fundamental aspects of what is called "competence to proceed": a basic comprehension of the purpose and nature of the trial process (Understanding), the capacity to provide relevant information to counsel and to process information (Reasoning), and the ability to apply information to one's own situation in a manner that is neither distorted nor irrational (Appreciation) (Bonnie, 1992, 1993).

In addition to defendants' basic understanding and reasoning abilities their competence as decision-makers may be significant in cases in which defendants must make important choices about the waiver of constitutional rights, such as the right to a jury trial or to protect oneself against self-incrimination (Bonnie, 1992, 1993). A potentially important difference between adolescents and adults in this regard involves aspects of psychosocial maturation that include progress toward greater future orientation, better risk perception, and less susceptibility to peer influence. Several authors have hypothesized that these developmental factors could result in differences between adolescents' and adults'

decisionmaking about important rights in the adjudicative process (Cauffman & Steinberg, 2000; Scott, 1992; Scott, Reppucci, & Woolard, 1995; Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996).

Current law does not include these developmental factors as relevant when considering a defendant's competence to stand trial. For example, when making a decision about waiver of important rights, defendants are free to place a primary value on their immediate gratification at the expense of their future welfare, or to opt to please their friends rather than act in their best interests, as long as they adequately understand and grasp the consequences of their choices. But if adolescents place a relatively higher value on immediate gratification than adults as a consequence of their developmental immaturity, they may make different legal decisions than adults. Although psychosocial immaturity is not addressed in the formal legal construct of competence to stand trial, it needs to be investigated in this context to provide a comprehensive account of adolescents' capacities to participate in the trial process.

In general, there has been little recognition that youths in criminal court may be incompetent due to developmental immaturity.

In the present study, we examined age differences in the two types of capacities outlined above – competence to proceed and "decisional competence" – in order to ascertain whether, to what extent, and at what ages juveniles may be more at risk than adults for incompetence as legal defendants in criminal trials. Individuals were administered a structured interview in which they were asked to respond to a series of hypothetical vignettes that concerned a range of situations and decisions that ordinarily arise during criminal proceedings.

Participants in the study, half of whom were in juvenile detention facilities or adult jails, and half of whom were drawn from the community, included nearly 1,000 juveniles aged 11 to 17 and nearly 500 young adults aged 18 to 24. In order to draw more fine-grained distinctions among juveniles of different ages, for purposes of data analyses we grouped adolescents into 11- to 13-year-olds, 14- to 15-year-olds, and 16- to 17-year-olds. Because the law does not draw age distinctions among individuals 18 and older, our young adult sample was treated as one group.

Method

A brief description of the study's methodology follows. Greater detail regarding the study's sample, instruments, and procedures is available in a full report of the study's findings (Grisso, et al., 2003) and in an archival report of the study's method, available at www.mac-adoldev-juvjustice.org.

Participants

Tables 1 and 2 show the demographic composition of the study groups. Males composed 66.3% of the Detained sample and 56.8% of the Community sample. The ethnic composition of the sample was about 40% African-American, 23% Hispanic, 35% non-Hispanic white, 1% Asian, and 1% from other ethnic identities; these proportions were similar across age and Detained/Community groups. Most participants in both the Detained samples (75% and 77%) and Community samples (62% and 73%) were classified in the two lowest socioeconomic classes using the Hollingshead (1975) system.

To enhance ethnic diversity and minimize bias due to geographic location, the study employed four data collection sites: Los Angeles (29% of total sample), Philadelphia (28%), northern Florida (16%) and northern, central, and western Virginia (27%). The age proportions in our Detained youth samples were representative of juvenile detention centers generally, and the proportions of different ethnic groups in the Detained youth sample were nearly identical to those reported in a national survey of juvenile detention centers (Snyder and Sickmund, 1999).

Independent Variables

Demographic and Justice System Experience Variables. We obtained data regarding age, gender, ethnicity, mental health problems, and socioeconomic status by self-report. For the Detained samples, we also obtained information about their present charge and the extent of their prior experience in the justice system.

Dependent Variables

Functional Abilities Related to Competence to Stand Trial. The primary dependent variable was the *MacArthur Competence Assessment Tool-Criminal Adjudication* (MacCAT-CA), designed to assess criminal defendants' abilities to participate in their defense ("competence to stand trial") (Otto, et al., 1998; Poythress et al., 1999). Individuals respond to a series of questions based on a hypothetical vignette concerning a crime and the subsequent court proceeding. The instrument's scoring criteria, as well as norms based on large, national samples of pretrial adult defendants, are provided in the MacCAT-CA manual. The standard administration and content of the MacCAT-CA were unaltered for the present study.

In addition to defendants' basic understanding and reasoning abilities, their competence as decision-makers may be significant in cases in which defendants must make important choices about the waiver of constitutional rights, such as the right to a jury trial or to protect oneself against self-incrimination.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

	Detained					Community				
	Youth Age Groups			Youth	Adults	Youth Age Groups			Youth	Adults
	11-13	14-15	16-17	11-17	18-24	11-13	14-15	16-17	11-17	18-24
Participants (n)	74	186	193	453	233	116	159	199	474	233
Male (% of age group)	74	62	62	64	71	52	60	57	57	57
Ethnicity (% of age group)										
African-American	56	32	38	39	43	41	52	33	41	37
Hispanic	21	28	25	26	25	20	20	21	20	24
Non-Hispanic White	21	35	35	32	32	36	28	44	37	37
Asian and Other	2	5	2	3	0	3	0	2	2	2
Socioeconomic Status (% of age group)										
I-II	8	7	11	9	7	15	13	15	14	9
III	12	16	18	16	16	23	26	24	24	18
IV-V	80	77	71	75	77	62	61	61	62	73

The 22 MacCAT-CA items are grouped into three subscales: *Understanding*, *Reasoning*, and *Appreciation*. *Understanding* assesses comprehension of courtroom procedures, the roles of different court personnel, and the defendant's rights at trial. *Reasoning* assesses the recognition of information relevant to a legal defense and the ability to process that information for legal decision-making. The *Appreciation* subscale, referring to a person's ability to appreciate the relevance of information for one's own situation, assesses whether a defendant's legal decision-making is influenced by symptoms of mental illness, such as delusional thinking.[1]

We used mean scores on the MacCAT-CA subscales, as well as a system of classifying subscale scores into three hierarchical categories using pre-established cut-off scores provided in the MacCAT-CA manual indicating "minimal or no impairment," "mild impairment," or "clinically significant impairment." The cut-off score for "clinically significant impairment" is set at the score equaling 1.5 standard deviations below the mean of the "presumed competent" samples in the original MacCAT-CA norming study (Poythress et al., 1999). Performance above 1.0 standard deviation below the mean for those samples is considered to represent "minimal or no impairment." Scores between those two cut-offs were labeled "mild impairment."

Decisions and Judgment in the Adjudicative Process. The *MacArthur Judgment Evaluation (MacJEN)*, developed for this study and based on an earlier instrument (Woolard, 1998), was designed to provide data regarding age-related differences in choices and the psychosocial factors that might influence those choices. The MacJEN uses vignettes to pose three legal decisions common in the delinquency/criminal process: (a) responding to police interrogation when one has committed a crime, (b) disclosing information during consultation with a defense attorney; and (c) responding to a plea agreement for reduced consequences in exchange for a guilty plea and

[1] Our inspection of juveniles' answers to the items measuring Appreciation led us to believe that many of the younger individuals were receiving low scores on this subscale not because of impaired thinking, but because they simply lacked sufficient knowledge of courtroom procedures (which would be more properly reflected in low scores on the Understanding subscale). As a consequence, we decided to focus our analyses of the MacCAT-CA on the Understanding or Reasoning subscales. This decision likely resulted in our underestimating the proportions of juveniles whose competence might be impaired, but gave us greater confidence in the validity of our findings.

Table 2: Number of Participants in Gender/Ethnicity by Age Groups (Percent of Age Group in Parentheses)

	Detained				Community			
	11-13	14-15	16-17	18-24	11-13	14-15	16-17	18-24
Males								
African-American	27 (37)	40 (22)	47 (24)	70 (30)	24 (21)	49 (31)	32 (16)	47 (20)
Hispanic	12 (16)	30 (16)	25 (13)	47 (20)	15 (13)	16 (10)	22 (11)	32 (14)
Non-Hispanic White	13 (18)	41 (22)	46 (24)	48 (21)	20 (17)	30 (19)	55 (28)	50 (21)
Asian and Other	2 (3)	4 (2)	2 (1)	0	1 (1)	1 (1)	4 (2)	3 (1)
Females								
African-American	14 (19)	20 (11)	27 (14)	29 (12)	23 (20)	33 (21)	33 (17)	39 (17)
Hispanic	3 (4)	23 (12)	23 (12)	12 (5)	8 (7)	15 (9)	19 (10)	24 (10)
Non-Hispanic White	2 (3)	24 (13)	21 (11)	27 (12)	22 (19)	15 (9)	33 (17)	37 (16)
Asian and Other	0	4 (2)	1 (1)	0	3 (2)	0	0	1 (1)

testimony against other defendants. Respondents are given several response choices and asked to recommend a "best choice" and "worst choice" for the vignette character.

MacJEN responses were also scored according to predetermined criteria designed to identify three variables representing aspects of psychosocial maturity believed to affect decision-making: *risk appraisal* (represented by three indexes), *future orientation*, and *resistance to peer influence*. Participants' "best choice" recommendations were also used to create a variable indicating their readiness to comply with authority figures.

Procedure

Our research assistants visited the participating juvenile detention centers and adult jails once or twice a week for about 11 months. They were assisted by staff to identify new detainees who had arrived since the previous visit, and to determine whether any detainees had been "screened out" by staff or participant advocates regarding potential research participation due to mental illness or significant adjustment problems. Any detainees who had not been screened out were approached by research assistants with an explanation of the study, the procedure, and a request for assent to participate. Females and very young adolescents were over-sampled in proportion to their actual representation in detention and jail facilities.

Community youths and young adults were solicited in neighborhoods served by the relevant youth detention or adult jail facilities. Community youths were solicited in schools, youth programs, and Girls' and Boys' Clubs, while community adults were solicited in community clubs, agencies and shelters, and at community colleges, using posters, leaflets, and/or direct contact by research assistants. As data collection proceeded, the age by gender by ethnic proportions that were accruing in the Detained samples were examined periodically to guide a more selective approach to the recruitment of potential Community participants, aiming at final Community samples that were demographically similar to their respective Detained samples.

All participation was voluntary. Detained youths and adults received $10 for their participation (or snacks in some facilities that did not allow monetary awards); community youths and adults received $25. When a participant had consented/assented, the research assistant administered the study protocol, which typically required between 90 and 180 minutes.

Results

Age Differences in Understanding and Reasoning

We found significant age differences in individuals' performance on the Understanding, and Reasoning subscales of the MacCAT-CA, our chief measure of capacities relevant to individuals' competence to stand trial. In general, the 11-13 year-olds performed significantly worse than the 14-15 year-olds, who performed significantly worse than the two older groups. Importantly, however, the performance of the 16-17 year-olds did not differ from that of the young adults.

These same patterns of age differences were also seen when analyses were used to compare age groups with respect to the proportions of individuals showing various levels of impairment—"no impairment," "mild impairment," or "significant impairment." For example, whereas 20% of 11-13 year-olds, and 13% of 14-15 year-olds, showed significantly impaired Understanding, only 7% of the 16-17 year olds and this same proportion of adults scored in this range. Similarly, proportions of individuals showing significantly impaired Reasoning declined from 16% among 11-13 year-olds to 9% among 14-15 year-olds, to less than 7% among 16-17 year-olds and young adults.

It is important to examine the proportions of each age group who show significantly impaired Understanding *or* Reasoning (or both), because significant impairment in either could raise doubts about competence. These results are presented in Figure 1, illustrating that 30% of 11-13 year-olds and 19% of 14-15-year-olds were significantly impaired on one or both of these subscales; the figures for 16-17 year olds and for young adults were both 12%. In general, this pattern of age differences did not vary as a function of gender, ethnicity, SES, or geographic region. And, although levels of impairment were consistently lower among Detained than Community individuals (largely because of the lower intelligence of the individuals in detention facilities and jails relative to the general population, and the significant relation between IQ and MacCAT-CA performance), the overarching pattern of age differences was observed in both settings. Nor did performance on this assessment vary within the Detained sample as a function of prior experience in the justice system, or within the entire sample as a function of mental health symptoms (but recall that individuals with severe mental health problems were likely screened out of the study).

Overall, age and intelligence were the only consistent predictors of individuals' understanding and reasoning, and these predictors each contributed independently to MacCAT-CA performance. As a consequence, younger individuals of lower intelligence were especially likely to be deficient in the necessary capacities associated with trial competence. Indeed, among 11-13 year olds, more than one-half with an IQ between 60 and 74, and more than one-third with an IQ between 75 and 89, were significantly impaired. Among 14-15 year olds, approximately 40% of those with an IQ between 60 and 74, and more than one in four with an IQ between 75 and 89, were comparably impaired. These figures are important because between one-fifth and one-quarter of juveniles aged 15 and younger in the Detained sample had IQ scores between 60 and 74, and approximately 40% of Detained juveniles aged 15 and younger had IQ scores between 75 and 89. In other words, approximately two-thirds of the Detained juveniles aged 15 and younger had an IQ that was associated with a significant risk of being incompetent to stand trial due to impaired Understanding or Reasoning or both.

Age Differences in Legal Decision-Making

The pattern of age differences found in individuals' courtroom understanding and reasoning was largely replicated in our examination of their decision-making in situations involving a police interrogation, consultation with one's attorney, and consideration of a proffered plea agreement. Generally speaking, 11-13 year-olds showed different choices and less mature decision-making than 14-15 year-olds, who lagged behind the 16-17 year-olds and young adults. Once again, we saw few differences between the young adults and the adolescents who were 16 and older.

Basic research on cognitive and psychosocial development suggests that some youths will manifest deficits in legally-relevant abilities similar to deficits seen in adults with mental disabilities, but for reasons of immaturity rather than mental disorder.

Overall, we found that younger individuals are more likely to make decisions that comply with authority. Thus, compared with older adolescents and young adults, adolescents aged 15 and younger are more likely to recommend confessing to the police rather than remaining silent and accepting a plea bargain offered by a prosecutor rather than going to trial (see Figures 2 and 3). For example, the proportion of participants who chose confession as the best choice decreased with age, from about one-half of the 11-13 year-olds to only one-fifth of young adults, and the proportion accepting the plea agreement decreased from 74% among 11-13 year olds to 50% of young adults.

In addition to examining the *content* of individuals' decisions, we also coded their responses to the vignettes for the degree to which their recommendations appeared to include some assessment of the risks involved, some consideration of the long- as well as short-term consequences of their recommendations, and some resistance to the influence of peer pressure. Each of these factors have been discussed as potential influences on decision-making that might distinguish juveniles from adults (e.g., Scott, et al., 1995; Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996). That is, it has been suggested that juveniles legal decision-making may be compromised relative to that of adults because adolescents are not as likely to accurately appraise risks, to think about the future as well as immediate consequences of their decisions, and to resist the influence of others to change their mind.

Continued on pg. 10

Research on Juvenile Competency: A Defender's Perspective

Steven A. Drizin, Northwestern University

In October 1996, eleven year old Lacresha Murray was interrogated by detectives from the Austin Police Department in connection with the death of Jayla Belton, a two year old girl who had been left in the care of Lacresha's grandparents. Throughout the interview, she repeatedly denied any involvement in the toddler's death. Finally, a detective suggested to Lacresha that the baby may have been hurt in an accident, saying that perhaps the baby slipped out of her arms while she was carrying her. After repeated prompting, Lacresha finally told the detectives what they wanted to hear—when she had picked up the baby to take her to her grandpa, the baby fell and hit her head on the floor. Detectives typed up the "confession" and gave it to Lacresha. "Can you read pretty good," a detective asked Lacresha. "No, but I try hard," she said. As she struggled to read the statement, Lacresha came across a word she didn't understand and could not pronounce. "What is a home-a-seed?" she asked. The detectives corrected her pronunciation but never answered the question (Herbert, 1998). Lacresha's statements led two separate juries to convict her for causing the death of Jayla, and she eventually received a twenty five year sentence. Her conviction and sentence were later reversed on appeal (*In re L.M.*, 1999)

In November 1999, a Michigan jury convicted thirteen year old Nathaniel Abraham of second degree murder in the shooting death of Ronnie Greene, a crime committed when Abraham was only eleven years old. Under Michigan law, Judge Eugene Moore could have sentenced Nathaniel as a juvenile, as an adult, or given him a blended sentence that treated Nathaniel initially as a juvenile and then later as an adult if he failed to rehabilitate himself with services provided in the juvenile system. Judge Moore gave the boy the break of his life, sentencing Abraham as a juvenile and sparing him a sentence of between 8 and 25 years in prison. But the boy, who fidgeted and doodled during the judge's twenty-minute speech, didn't appreciate the judge's generosity. Reportedly, he turned to his attorney after the judge had concluded, and asked, "What happened?" (Goodman, 2000).

On July 28, 1999, six year old Tiffany Eunick died from injuries sustained while playing with twelve-year-old Lionel Tate, a 166-pound boy in Tate's Pembroke, Florida home. Lionel claimed he had picked up Tiffany in a bear hug while they were roughhousing and accidentally hit her head on a coffee table. His story, however, did not square with the evidence of her extensive injuries, including head trauma, lacerations to her liver, and several broken ribs. Broward County prosecutors brought Lionel's case before a grand jury, which returned an indictment against the boy for first degree murder. Several times before trial, Broward County prosecutors reportedly offered to let Lionel plead guilty to second-degree murder in exchange for a sentence of three years in a juvenile center, one year of house arrest, ten years of psychological testing and counseling, and 1000 hours of community service. Each time, Lionel and his mother rejected the offer. He was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life without the possibility of parole (Bennett, 2001).

The cases of Lacresha Murray, Nathaniel Abraham, and Lionel Tate call into question the competency of these young people to stand trial in adult court. Using the generally accepted definition of competency as the ability to understand the nature of the proceedings, including the roles of the parties to the proceedings, and the ability to participate meaningfully in one's own defense (*Dusky v. U.S.*, 1960), some, if not all, of the following questions must be asked: Could Lacresha have understood her Miranda rights? Was she a competent enough decision maker to entrust her with the choice to give them up? Was she overly compliant with authority, and did police interrogation tactics take advantage of this compliance to produce a coerced, or even a false, confession? How much did Nathaniel and Lionel understand about their court proceedings? Could they meaningfully participate in their defense? Was Lionel competent to decide to reject a reasonable plea offer? Did he discount the risk of future harm of a conviction in favor of the short term benefit of an acquittal? These and other competency-related questions, however, were of no concern to lawmakers who in the 1990s enacted new laws to make it easier to prosecute children as adults at younger and younger ages. But they were of great concern to lawyers, who like me, were charged with representing these youngsters.

Although many juvenile defenders suspected that our clients were not fully capable of participating in their own defense or assisting us in defending them, the legal standard of competence offered us no relief. In a televised interview, in Frontline's "A Crime of Insanity," Albany County, New York prosecutor Cheryl Coleman aptly described the standard of competency as "the ability to tell the difference between a judge and a grapefruit" (Frontline, 2002). Under this unforgiving standard, only the severely mentally ill and the most profoundly mentally retarded defendants are found incompetent in criminal court. Many of our juvenile clients have low or below average I.Q. scores, were learning disabled, or were below grade level in reading, writing, and math, but few fail the "grapefruit" test. Their incompetence is primarily due to their youth and immaturity. In short,

we have recognized the problem but were powerless to do anything about it. We needed social science support for the relationship between age and immaturity and incompetency and a legal framework in which to raise such claims.

In "Juveniles' Competence to Stand Trial: A Comparison of Adolescents' and Adults' Capacities as Trial Defendants," Steinberg et al. have given defenders what we need, making a powerful case that age and immaturity are directly related to questions about competency. Their findings, particularly that youths under age 16 have a lesser understanding of courtroom procedures and their trial rights and are less capable of using information relevant to a legal defense to assist them in legal decision making, should be enormously helpful to those of us who represent juvenile defendants in adult court. Now, for the first time, we have the ammunition to argue that trial courts must take special care in assessing whether juvenile defendants are competent to stand trial as adults.

Even more important, however, are their findings with respect to the way that immature thinking effects adolescent decision making in the context of criminal proceedings. These findings enable us to argue for a broader legal construct of competency, one which recognizes that developmental factors may compromise the decision making ability of teenage criminal defendants. Characteristics such as compliance with authority figures, deficiencies in risk recognition and discounting of long-term consequences in favor of short term gains, are staples of adolescent thinking which render youths less competent to make such critical decisions as deciding whether to confess to a crime or to accept a plea bargain. If courts accept a definition of competency which accounts for these characteristics, future teenagers who are like Lacresha, Nathaniel, and Lionel may no longer be forced to make life-altering decisions in the context of criminal court proceedings which they are either incapable of making or less capable of making than adults.

Competency is an important framework for defenders in adult court because it focuses the court on the fact that teenagers are not simply "miniature adults," a fact that can get lost in a system which values retribution and punishment over rehabilitation and which often punishes juveniles convicted of serious crimes more harshly than adults (Tanenhaus & Drizin, 2002). Instead of a defendant's youth being seen as a liability, the frame of competency can turn it into an asset. Extensive pre-trial concentration on competency may influence a judge's later legal decisions in motions to suppress confessions, in assessing a juvenile's culpability in the guilt-innocence phase of the trial, and in assessing mitigation at sentencing.

For defenders routinely to seek competency evaluations, however, additional legal changes need to be made to further distance age and immaturity-related incompetency from incompetency due to disability or mental illness. Defendants who are now found to be incompetent are often shipped to bleak state or county mental health facilities to be "restored" to competency. To their credit, Steinberg et al., recognize this problem, acknowledging that "restoration" is not an appropriate goal for youths who are incompetent based upon immature reasoning and offer other options like prosecuting the incompetent juvenile in juvenile court. Until such "other dispositions are offered" the authors write, "courts and legislators are unlikely to deal seriously with developmental competence." The same can be said of defenders who may also be reluctant to seek competency evaluations until they know that doing so will not do more harm than good for their clients.

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In re L.M., 993 S.W.2d276 (Tex App.-Austin, 1999)

Tanenhaus, David & Drizin, Steven, "Owing To The Extreme Youth Of The Accused": The Changing Legal Response To Juvenile Homicide, *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, 92, 641-705.

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Figure 1. Proportion of individuals at different ages who are significantly impaired with respect to either or both MacCAT-CA Understanding and Reasoning.

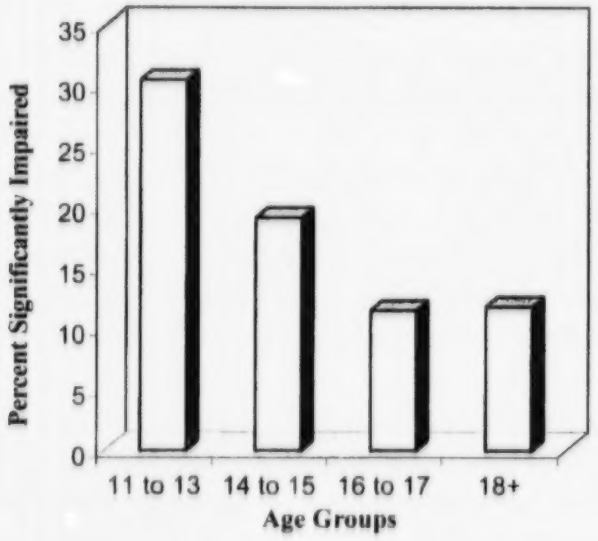
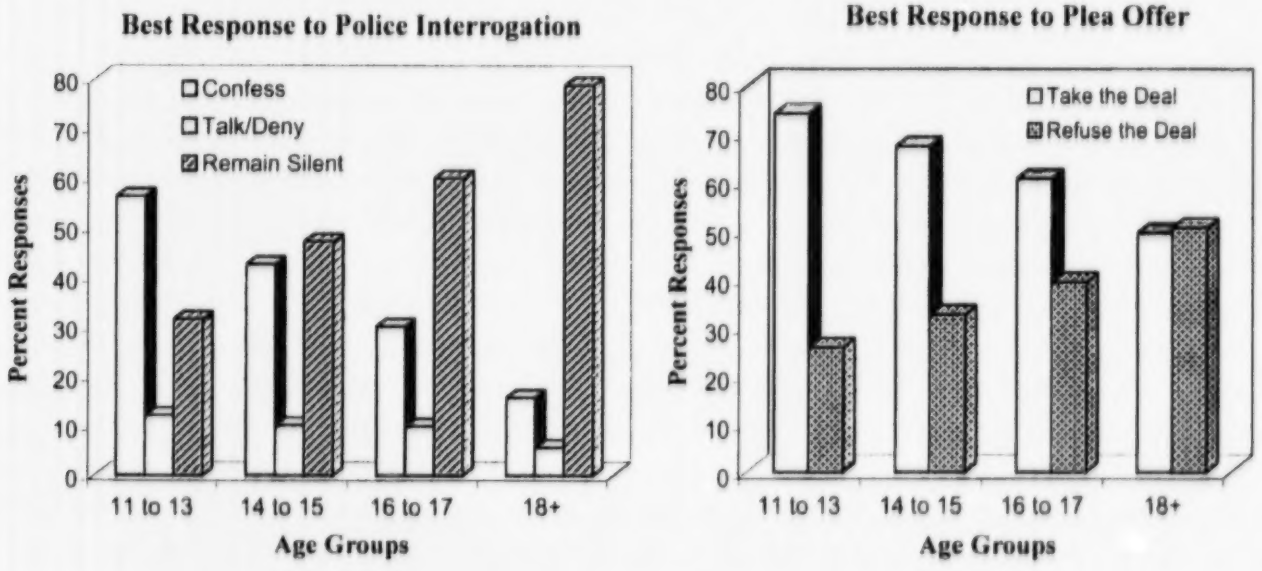


Figure 2. Decision choices for Police Interrogation and Plea Agreement vignettes as a function of age.



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Generally speaking, our findings are consistent with the notion that there is an increase in maturity of judgment in legal decision-making over the course of adolescence. Compared to older adolescents and young adults, for example, younger adolescents significantly less often recognized the risks inherent in various decision options, less often thought that the risks they identified were likely to happen, and less often thought that these risks would be serious if they were to occur. In addition, we found that youths under 14 were significantly less likely than other age groups to note long-range, future consequences in explaining their recommendations. We did not find systematic age differences in the extent to which individuals changed their choices in the face of peer pressure; resistance to peer influence varied in complicated ways that depended on which vignette was examined and the particular choice the individual had initially recommended. Age differences in adolescents' choices and reasoning were consistent across gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic region.

Discussion

Taken together, our results indicate that juveniles aged 15 and younger are significantly more likely than older adolescents and young adults to be impaired in ways that compromise their ability to serve as competent defendants in a criminal proceeding. Based on criteria established in studies of mentally ill adult offenders (Otto et al, 1998; Poythress et al., 1999), approximately one-third of 11- to 13-year-olds and approximately one-fifth of 14- to 15-year-olds are as impaired in capacities relevant to adjudicative competence as are seriously mentally ill adults who would likely be considered incompetent to stand trial by clinicians who perform evaluations for courts. Our results also indicate that the competence-relevant capacities of 16- and 17-year-olds as a group do not differ significantly from those of young adults. These patterns of age differences are robust across groups defined by gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, and they are evident among individuals in the justice system and in the community. Not surprisingly, juveniles of below-average intelligence are more likely than juveniles of average intelligence to be impaired in abilities relevant for competence to stand trial. Because a greater proportion of youths in the juvenile justice system than in the community are of below-average intelligence, the risk for incompetence to stand trial is therefore even greater among adolescents who are in the justice system than it is among adolescents in the community.

Based on criteria established in studies of mentally ill adult offenders (Otto et al, 1998; Poythress et al., 1999), approximately one-third of 11- to 13-year-olds and approximately one-fifth of 14- to 15-year-olds are as impaired in capacities relevant to adjudicative competence as are seriously mentally ill adults who would likely be considered incompetent to stand trial by clinicians who perform evaluations for courts.

The results of our examination of adolescents' and young adults' responses to decision-making vignettes indicate that psychosocial immaturity may affect the performance of youths as defendants in ways that extend beyond the elements of understanding and reasoning that are explicitly relevant under the law to competence to stand trial. Adolescents are more likely than young adults to make choices that reflect a propensity to comply with authority figures, such as confessing to the police rather than remaining silent or accepting a prosecutor's offer of a plea agreement. In addition, when being interrogated by the police, consulting with an attorney, or evaluating a plea agreement, younger adolescents are less likely, or perhaps less able, than others to recognize the risks inherent in the various choices they face or to consider the long-term, and not merely the immediate, consequences of their legal decisions. As is the case with capacities relevant for competence to stand trial, these patterns of age differences in legal decision-making generally do not vary with gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Three cautions must be kept in mind when interpreting these findings. First, no set of standardized observations regarding abilities associated with competence to stand trial can identify all of the abilities that courts might consider when making decisions about defendants' competence. One must also be careful not to interpret our proportions of youths with "serious impairments" on the MacCAT-CA as the percentage of juveniles who are actually incompetent to stand trial; the instrument assesses capacities that are relevant for the competence question, but not legal competence itself. The MacCAT-CA is a research instrument, not a diagnostic tool. More importantly, neither the law nor the social sciences recognizes any psychometric definition of legal incompetence.

Second, our method for obtaining the detained juveniles may have reduced the number of youths in our samples with serious (e.g., psychotic) mental disorders. Such youths are often diverted from detention to psychiatric services, or they may have been screened out of study participation, in either case making them unavailable to the study interviewers; this might not have been the case for the jailed adults. If this is so, the present results should be seen as conservative age-related estimates of proportions of youths with serious impairments, since inclusion of youths with serious mental disorders would likely have increased those proportions.

Finally, we caution against the application of these results to legal issues other than competence to stand trial. Society is engaged in active debate concerning whether adolescents should be held responsible for their offenses to the same degree, and punished to the same extent, as adults (Scott & Steinberg, 2003; Steinberg &

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Developmental Research and the Formulation and Evaluation of Legal Policy

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The legislative 'epidemic' of the 1990s, in which state after state expanded the set of juvenile offenses subject to adjudication as an adult and lowered the age at which juveniles could be tried in adult criminal court, was especially surprising in light of its disconnection from any genuine epidemic in youth criminal activity. Tossing around terms like 'juvenile super-predators,' legislators seemed to engage in a race to create the most punitive set of waiver and transfer provisions in an attempt to prove their toughness on juvenile crime. These efforts have been successful, if the indicator of success is the number of juveniles being tried as adults: the Department of Justice reports a substantial increase in these numbers over the decade of the 1990s. It is unclear, however, if these actions have had any impact on public safety.

As this legislative tsunami was washing over the United States, the MacArthur Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice began a careful examination of the psychological and legal underpinnings of these policies. This issue of the *Social Policy Report* highlights some of the most important findings from the Network's empirical work on age, psychosocial maturity, and adjudicative competence. This study is an excellent example of policy-driven research. The specific research questions were developed with the intent of addressing questions of central importance in the legislative and legal arenas. Questions of theory are important, but clearly secondary to the psycho-legal issues surrounding the adjudicative competence of juveniles.

Legal policy is often constructed to guide and regulate human behavior, and as such, makes assumptions—usually implicit—about the factors that direct behavior. Developmental researchers, as this study indicates, can inform such policy making in a variety of ways, in the present case by ferreting out some of those assumptions and putting them to an empirical test. I will briefly describe three ways that developmental research can inform legal policy (there are others), but the developmental researcher interested in working in the legal policy arena must either acquire legal/policy expertise or partner with professionals possessing such expertise in order to effectively conduct such research. Without a detailed understanding of the legal issues in question, researchers are likely to find themselves pursuing questions that might be interesting in the sense that they grapple with important theoretical relationships, but irrelevant to legal policy because the questions have been incorrectly framed. The early history of psycholegal research was littered with such interesting but legally irrelevant studies. The present study, in contrast, addresses the relevant legal issues in a sophisticated fashion, thereby dramatically increasing the potential utility of the findings.

The present study represents one of the key ways in which developmental research can assist in the formulation of legal policy. The expansion of offense-based transfer policies challenges some of the underpinnings of the juvenile court system, among them the assumption that juveniles are on the whole less competent with respect to their understanding of courtroom procedures and their legal rights. Developmental researchers are well situated to empirically examine these types of assumptions in a relatively fine-grained fashion, thus providing legal policy makers with an assessment of the accuracy of their assumptions. Legal assumptions about juvenile culpability and amenability to treatment are also legitimate topics for developmental analysis, and some researchers have begun tackling these topics.

Developmental research can also prove useful in assessing the consequences of legal policy. What will the consequences of these changes in transfer policy be for the development and psycho-social well-being of youth caught up by them? Criminologists are likely to focus on outcomes such as recidivism or perceptions of procedural justice, but policy makers are also likely to be interested in broader developmental effects of such policies.

Policy-driven research is not something to be undertaken by the faint-of-heart, and research on transfer policy provides an excellent example of why this is the case. Zimring and Fagan (2000) argue that debate around the transfer issue has generally been "unprincipled." By this, they mean that opponents and proponents of these policies are often less interested in the principles underlying the debate (How should juvenile and criminal courts differ from one another? Why? What factors should be used to determine the most appropriate jurisdiction? Etc.) than in the results of the debate. Consequently, researchers tackling these principles may be surprised that their findings are often vigorously attacked, not uncommonly from those on both sides of the debate. Even researchers who assiduously avoid taking an advocacy stance in response to their findings are not immune to such attacks, since the findings sometimes simply align more naturally with one side of the debate. In this instance, the best defense, as usual, is high quality research that can stand up to the scrutiny of our more methodologically-inclined peers and also address the policy issues in a sophisticated and nonpartisan fashion. Steinberg and colleagues have taken this path, which will likely lessen the attacks and also make policy audiences more receptive to these important findings.

Zimring, F.E., & Fagan, J. (2000). Transfer policy and law reform. In J. Fagan & F.E. Zimring (Eds.), *The changing borders of juvenile justice: Transfer of adolescents to the criminal court* (pp. 407-424). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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Scott, in press). Given the results of the present study, policymakers and practitioners may wish to consider whether the proportion of very young adolescents with deficits in abilities to participate in their trials is sufficiently great to warrant special protections against unfair adjudication as adults. However, our results say nothing about whether youths' developmental capacities render them more or less culpable than adults in terms of their behavior at the time of the alleged offense.

The present study compared juveniles and adults in their capacities to function in the trial process under established doctrinal requirements that focus on reasoning and understanding. But questions about how minors function as criminal defendants compared to adults go beyond those that are captured by the narrow focus of the ordinary competence inquiry. The study indicates that psychosocial immaturity may affect a young person's decisions, attitudes and behavior in the role of defendant in ways that do not directly implicate competence to stand trial, but that may be quite important to how they make choices, interact with police, relate to their attorneys, and respond to the trial context.

When being interrogated by the police, consulting with an attorney, or evaluating a plea agreement, younger adolescents are less likely, or perhaps less able, than others to recognize the risks inherent in the various choices they face or to consider the long-term, and not merely the immediate, consequences of their legal decisions.

Policymakers and practitioners should be concerned about these matters, and special procedures and strategies may be warranted when youths face criminal jeopardy. For example, if young persons are more likely to talk to the police than are adults because of different attitudes toward adult authority figures, they may be more vulnerable to police coercion. If so, youths may need special protection of their Fifth Amendment rights in the custodial context, such as a *per se* rule that requires the presence of an attorney as a predicate to interrogation (Grisso, 1980). In the plea agreement context, judicial inquiry that goes beyond the standard colloquy may be needed when courts are presented with a guilty plea by a young defendant. In general, those who deal with young persons charged with crimes—and particularly their attorneys—should be alert to the impact of psychosocial factors on youths' attitudes and decisions, even when their understanding and reasoning appear to be adequate. Deficiencies in risk perception and future orientation, as well as immature attitudes toward authority figures, may undermine competent decision-making in ways that standard assessments of competence to stand trial do not capture.

The findings of this study raise several important issues. Most obvious, perhaps, are the policy and practice implications for the adjudication of youths in adult criminal court. If one in three 11-13 year-old defendants potentially may not be competent to stand trial, this should be a concern whenever a youth in this age group is subject to adjudication as an adult. When youths are considered for transfer to criminal court on the basis of judicial discretion, the simplest response would be to make a determination of competence a condition of criminal adjudication for younger defendants. A few states, such as Virginia, already require a finding of competence to stand trial as a predicate condition before a court may consider the transfer of youths from juvenile to adult court (Va. Code Ann. Sect. 16.1-269.1 (A)(3)(2001)).

When youths are charged directly in criminal court, the proper mechanism might be a requirement that an evaluation and determination of competence to stand trial would automatically precede the adjudication. The optimal age boundary for an automatic inquiry into competence is not obvious; clearly jurisdictions and courts will vary, as will the procedures and instruments employed in the evaluations of juveniles' competence. (Our team is currently developing a developmentally-informed protocol for the assessment of competence among juvenile defendants.) It does seem clear, however, that at some minimal age, the risk of incompetence is so great that a determination should always be a predicate to adjudication in adult court. Even with youths older than this minimum age, defense attorneys, prosecutors and judges should be concerned about a defendant's competence to stand trial whenever adult adjudication is proposed for a juvenile. Although it is important that juveniles be represented by attorneys who understand why and in what ways adolescents may need special assistance from counsel, the law requires that defendants themselves be competent to stand trial.

The findings of the study may also be relevant to the legislative determination of the minimum age for adjudication of youths in adult court. Many jurisdictions have set the age bar very low for adult prosecution of youths for serious crimes, usually without consideration of the likelihood that many youths of the specified minimum age may be incompetent (Bonnie & Grisso, 2000). Because the evaluation and judicial determination of competence are likely to be costly in both time and money (and because the risk of incompetence is substantial below age 14), a legislature might well conclude that an efficient and just approach is to set the minimum age of adult adjudication at an age at which competence to stand trial is not potentially an issue in every case.

Careful attention must be directed toward devising dispositions for youths who are found to be incompetent as a result of developmental immaturity, in part to allay fears that might arise about the possibility that some dangerous youths would be immune from prosecution due to immaturity—a specter that will alarm many people. Whereas the disposition of mentally ill defendants is directed toward restoration to competence, this goal is not appropriate for immature youths who have never achieved competence. A disposition that simply waits for a youth to mature until he or she is competent to stand trial is both politically inconceivable and constitutionally problematic. Unless other

dispositions are offered, courts and legislatures are unlikely to deal seriously with developmental incompetence.

This challenge may be less daunting than it at first appears. Most youths who are not competent to stand trial as adults due to immaturity could likely be adjudicated in juvenile court. Moreover, some defendants whose incompetence is based solely on deficient understanding (rather than immature reasoning) could likely be tried as adults after a period of instruction about the matters they do not comprehend. Thus, the great majority of youths would be subject to adjudication on their criminal charges with little delay even when an assessment of their abilities indicates they do not meet adult competence standards.

The issue that our study addresses—the relationship between immaturity and competence to stand trial—has been largely unnoticed (at least in policy circles) during the last decade or so, as legislatures around the country have moved to facilitate the adjudication of younger and younger offenders in adult criminal court (Bonnie & Grisso, 2000). On reflection, however, it is obvious that the same due process constraints that prohibit the adjudication of mentally ill and mentally retarded defendants who do not understand the process they face or cannot assist their attorneys also apply to juveniles who are incompetent due to immaturity alone. The standard announced by the Supreme Court in *Dusky v. United States* (1960) is a functional test, and functionally it should make no difference whether the source of the defendant's incompetence is mental illness or immaturity.

Defense attorneys, prosecutors and judges should be concerned about a defendant's competence to stand trial whenever adult adjudication is proposed for a juvenile.

This study confronts policymakers and courts with an uncomfortable reality. Under well-accepted constitutional restrictions on the state's authority to adjudicate those charged with crimes, many young offenders—particularly among those under the age of 14—may not be appropriate subjects for criminal adjudication trial.

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Lead Article

Laurence Steinberg, Distinguished University Professor and Laura H. Carnell Professor of Psychology at Temple University, is Director of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice, a national initiative aimed at using scientific information on normative and atypical development during adolescence to improve policy and practice in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. **Thomas Grisso**, who directed the MacArthur Juvenile Adjudicative Competence Study, is Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. **Jennifer Woolard** is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Georgetown University. **Elizabeth Cauffman** is Assistant Professor of Law and Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. **Elizabeth Scott** is the University Professor and Robert C. Taylor Research Professor at the University of Virginia School of Law. **Sandra Graham** is Professor of Education at UCLA. **Fran Lexcen** is an Instructor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. **N. Dickon Reppucci** is Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia. **Robert Schwartz** is Director of the Juvenile Law Center, a children's rights organization based in Philadelphia.

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Content

The *Report* provides a forum for scholarly reviews and discussions of developmental research and its implications for policies affecting children. The Society recognizes that few policy issues are noncontroversial, that authors may well have a "point of view," but the *Report* is not intended to be a vehicle for authors to advocate particular positions on issues. Presentations should be balanced, accurate, and inclusive. The publication nonetheless includes the disclaimer that the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Society or the editors.

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